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In this issue we find pleasure in having a balance of articles, on education and other areas of thought besides literature. There is also a balance between traditional and topical subjects. Perhaps some of these will elicit replies in the form of correspondence which we shall try to feature at more speed than our earlier versions of postal chess!

During the last four years Robert Wyllie has shown deep interest in the life and health of this journal. As co-editor, he was unstinting in the scrutiny of articles and time for consultation. On his retirement from the Department of Philosophy, we thank him for his loyal support of *Theoria*.

THE EDITORS

ALEX COMFORT ON SELF AND RELIGION

A CASE STUDY IN MERGENCE OF EASTERN AND WESTERN THINKING

by J.C. POYNTON

Western thinking has had little place for the idea that 'things' have their origin in mind or consciousness. Among Indian thinkers, this idea has been commonplace for over two millennia; the *Dhammapada*, a central early Buddhist text, starts with the teaching, 'All things are preceded by the mind, led by the mind, created by the mind'.[1] In this century, the revolution in physics has been forcing a view of this kind into Western thinking; thus the statement by a major physicist, Henry Margenau, that 'Consciousness is the primary medium of all reality'.[2] Yet those engaged in the life sciences have, by and large, shown reluctance or even inability to adopt a view of this kind: to them the physical brain is the source of consciousness, not the other way round. It is not often realized that our study of 'things', such as a brain, ought to rest on a study of the way in which 'things' are conceived in the first place.

Nevertheless, the naïvety of the conventional view has been dawning on an increasing number of thinkers in the life sciences during the past decade. As could be expected, this dawning has revolutionary consequences; consequences which could hardly be better shown than in a recent incursion into the very Bastille of conservative life-science thinking, namely medicine. The insurgent in question is Dr Alex Comfort, a physician, psychiatrist and biologist with a long list of publications, including two Pelicans, *Sex in society* and *Nature and human nature*. This is not necessarily the image of a revolutionary, and it seems that a visit to India and familiarity with Sanskrit has been a major source of Comfort's stimulation and equipment as a revolutionary. Also, he owes much to William Blake, whose plea for integrating analytic and holistic approaches is only now really striking a chord in the scientific community.

The radical approach that Comfort takes to the nature of self is quintessentially Indian. Western thinking has generally been naïve about this matter: the self is taken to be some kind of primary 'given', a coherent focal or reference point that can be taken for granted — not the illusion of all illusions as seen by Hindu and (perhaps even more radically) by Buddhist thinkers; a primary illusion because the illusion of a whole external world arises out of the illusory, world-creating self.

This is not to say that the discoveries of Western science are so many flowers in the sky, to borrow a Buddhist expression for

unsubstantial imaginings, and Comfort's book is particularly interesting as an attempt to integrate our current neurology of self with the Indian philosophy of self. Out of this attempt come insights that give, among other things, a highly stimulating approach to the nature of religion. Comfort takes this approach to be a 'biology of religion'; hence the title of his book, *I and That : notes on the biology of religion*.[1]

The fact that religion is a human behaviour at all suggests to Comfort that religion must have a biology. Yet the kind of behaviour properly called 'religious' is not, in his view, a commonplace idea of it as 'experience of "the numinous", the recognition of a "supernatural" order of some kind', or 'one or both of these as a source of ethical imperatives' (p. 11). He sees religion as having more to do with 'experience of being'; and central to this experience, inevitably, is the 'awareness of "I" as an inner person, separate from "my body", and *a fortiori* from the extra-body environment: the "dwarf sitting in the middle", in the words of the *Katha upanishad*' (p. 12). Comfort terms this 'central human experience' of I-ness the 'homuncular vision' or 'homuncular identity'.

In psychiatry, as Comfort points out, this homuncular I-ness is taken to be 'normal', even though the state of I-ness is not examined very carefully. Indeed, the very fact that it is taken to be 'normal' practically diverts attention from it, and psychiatry thus falls in line with general Western naïvety: homuncular I-ness is taken to be a primary 'given'. Certainly, a sense of I-ness is acknowledged to be upset by drugs and other manipulations, and by disease, but nothing world-shaking is seen in these upsets. Yet, to the individual who clearly and intensely experiences an upsetting of his I-ness, the situation is very different indeed: the experience can be world-shaking in the most literal sense, for in this state it can be directly and plainly seen that the 'world' of one's experience is in fact something that is contingent on the experiencing I.

The panic of early schizophrenia is the commonest condition that presents psychiatrists with individuals who are, in Comfort's words, 'bothered by such questions as "what is realness?" ' (pp. 12–13). This tends to reinforce the conventional Western estimation of such potentially revelatory experiences as being 'abnormal' and requiring some kind of attention. Even where psychosis is not suspected, severe anxiety may accompany an upsetting of I-ness and a resulting discovery of how contingent the experienced world is. So it is a seemingly small step to regard *all* kinds of 'oceanic experience', in which a sense of I-ness is dissolved, as being pathological to some degree, and in need of correction.

Probably the most important thing about Comfort's book is that, as a psychiatrist, he takes up arms against this view and shows it can lead to nothing but personal and cultural impoverishment,

and very often to bad therapy. For a start, it leads to a total misunderstanding of 'religion', in the sense used by Comfort. He points out that 'Very few career mystics of any persuasion, and very few individuals who have had one or more oceanic experiences spontaneously, are clinically psychotic by any intelligible criteria' (p. 39). This is so even though 'many psychotics engage in cult formation based on hallucinatory experiences. A careful history will usually discriminate psychotic experiences, which almost always contain persistent thought disorder, from oceanic states which mimic them in language' (p. 39).

But freeing I-less, 'nonpositional, observerless experience' from its pathological stigma is only the first step. As many Indian thinkers have recognized for a very long time, and as Comfort directs his book to showing, the real reward of a 'mystical dissolution of the homuncular view' is that it 'throws a flood of light on the whole process of "objective" observation — the religion of our own culture — and reveals a great deal about its structure' (p. 14).

Western philosophy, all along, has had in the background a suspicion that the observer has some role in the structuring of 'reality', but it was in physics that this suspicion became forced into a solid realization, with all the strangeness that this realization has for Westerners. Sixty years ago Eddington wrote, 'When space and time are relegated to their proper source — the observer — the world of nature which remains appears strangely unfamiliar'.[4] So unfamiliar, in fact, that it is physics rather than philosophy that has kept 'the epistemological importance of I-ness' (to use Comfort's phrase) a live issue in Western thought. As Comfort remarks, 'physicists such as Mach and Heisenberg make no bones about the contingency of objective phenomena' (p. 15).

In common with most Anglo-American writers, Comfort overlooks the strides that Husserl's phenomenology took in this direction earlier this century; nevertheless, Comfort's grasp of the implications of modern physics sets a good example to others in the life and social sciences, where what he calls a 'flat-earth' mode of thinking still tends to be dominant. In this mode, 'Our normal, and for ordinary purposes necessary, perception of the objective, of causality, and of such things as linear time is perfectly adequate over the range of data-processing in which it presumably evolved, rather as for ordinary purposes the ground is best taken to be flat' (p. 15). But from a perspective of modern physics, 'what appears to be phenomena — time is an example —may turn out to be wholly structures; wholly consequences, that is, of a particular manner of intuitivist data-processing' (p. 16). Time, as he points out, is not a 'thing': 'it is the way in which we experience rather than an experience of a thing' (p. 18).

Although Comfort may have missed the importance of phenom-

enology as a face-to-face study of mental 'data-processing', his familiarity with Indian thinking has made him realize that while physics 'has been able by the force of experiment and mathematical analysis to develop a counterintuitive model of perception empirically, one sizeable human tradition arrived at the same counterintuitive model without any physical experimentation by cultivating mental states in which it was not inferred but actually experienced' (p. 17). This realization is not new: a congruence of physics and Indian philosophy has been extensively discussed in works such as Whiteman's *Philosophy of space and time*[5] and Capra's *The Tao of physics*.[6] Yet the situation is still unfamiliar to Western thinking, and our culture is a long way yet from explicitly integrating the inferring process of science with direct experiential seeing as practised in Indian culture. This gives our culture a type of split personality: as Comfort observes, 'There is something odd about a society which is able to infer relativistic time for one set of entirely practical objectives, and which continues to live in terms of flat-earth, literalistic and nineteenth-century objectivism as its religious or style-setting mode' (pp. 17–18).

But the crisis of integrating these two strands, of overcoming this discrepancy, is now upon us. From his professional standpoint, Comfort notes that 'Physicists, even the most rarefied of them, might not be too bothered by this discrepancy, but for a social psychiatrist interested in the development of cultural styles it suggests the imminence of a major transition' (p. 18). And one of the faults this transition must rectify is the 'systems break' which Comfort points out in our culture. He notes that the 'ideology of our own culture is linear objectivism: we regard the environment, including the neurology on which our experiences depend, as "real", and the temporal progression which we observe in it as real-time, and we deify or numinize the observer, who "is" by virtue of cogitating' (p. 19). Yet 'our militant objectivity has a subjectivity at its intellectual heart', which we fail to perceive 'through neglect to look at the implications of our notion — which is basically a subjective intuition — of identity' (p. 19).

I

Not only are we so used to a state of I-ness that we neglect to think much about it, there is a built-in difficulty even if we do try thinking about it. In Comfort's words, 'in any process of intellection an "I" is doing the cogitating, and a loop is built in from the start . . . even into the intuitive sense of having got a plausible answer' (p. 18). The mystico-religious traditions have developed strategies designed to break the loop by a cultivation of I-lessness,

strategies which Comfort believes can correctly be called 'scientific': their practitioners 'have hit upon a device, dodge, state, or pathological condition (possibly several or all of these) in which perception is experienced as I-less' (p. 18). What follows, Comfort believes, is 'an observation, not a fantasy — it fits the Baconian exclusionary rules in being consistent, having a structure which crosses all manner of cultural and preconceptual boundaries, and sounding exactly the same in report whether the observer was a yogi, a Christian monk, a Zen novice, a Hopi Indian or an Eskimo' (p. 18).

Experience in this I-less state consistently proves to be so fundamental to the 'experience of being' that Comfort finds it the hallmark of what is 'religious': it 'makes semantic sense to see "religious" behaviours as containing as their core various I-delimiting concerns, however much else they also contain' (p. 19). Religion, in Comfort's sense, thus 'involves the manipulation of our experience of I in relation to our experience of not-I (environment, other persons, nature, the gods, "reality", or in the Hindu terminology simply "That")' (p. 19).

Of all the various kinds of relationship between the experience of I and the experience of not-I, Comfort selects one kind for extended discussion. This is the experience in which there is a suspension of a sense of distinction between I and not-I (or That). The term he uses for this experience has been taken up occasionally (and usually at arm's length) in psychiatric literature since Freud: 'oceanic experience'. Comfort takes oceanic experience to be a condition in which, 'so far as its content can be verbalized, the strong sense of distinction between I and not-I is summarily suspended, and with it a number of normal classificatory processes involving categories, boundaries and distinctions, so that all which is perceived is, as it were, incorporated into the I of the perceiver, or the I of the perceiver becomes fused with some experienced totality, according to taste' (p. 34).

Comfort goes on to maintain that 'It is the non-experience of normal categories, rather than any ineffable content, and the fact that it reflects the activity of a non-verbal experiential mode, which makes the "oceanic" experience difficult to verbalize' (p. 34). Presumably the 'non-experience of normal categories' corresponds to some extent with the experience of 'emptiness', which is of central importance in Buddhism (unfortunately, Comfort does not mine the Buddhist seam of Indian thought nearly as much as he mines the Hindu seam, even though the Buddhist tradition can be said to offer much more in the way of rigorous, incisive and comprehensive material). It would be a problem to test Comfort's assertion that 'the non-experience of normal categories' presents more difficulties in verbalization than 'any ineffable content'. But

whatever the difficulties, this state of 'non-experience' or 'emptiness' should not be taken to imply (in contrast to 'ineffable content') a negative state: perception, for a start, still continues, but now, as Comfort puts it, 'with the homuncular experience of the self as perceiver in abeyance' (p. 35).

II

How can one characterize the content of experience when the self-as-perceiver is put to one side? Comfort believes that 'what is being introspected here is some feature of the structure of the perceptual mechanism or the zero-input display of the human brain' (p. 44). This touches on the more original aspect of Comfort's book, namely his attempt to integrate neurology (including systems theory) with mystico-religious philosophy. Essentially, he sees the nervous system as 'both pattern generator and pattern analyzer, and the patterns it generates and those it "sees" depend on the same circuitry' (p. 31). Patterning implies structure, 'some aspects of which reflect software, some hardware wiring, and yet others the geometry of hole-spacing in punch cards; in other words it is structural, and it is the structure through and with which the homuncular I looks out, and the structure it sees as zero-input display when it attempts to look in' (p. 33).

The 'group unconscious' of Jung is, according to his view, misleading if taken at all literally: together with occultism, folklore, myth and 'the esoterica now in revival', it represents 'the playback, not of external pattern, but of the structure of our pattern-selecting mechanism' (p. 33). Even our more prosaic thinking is conditioned by 'the existence of pattern ingrained in the machinery with which we perceive pattern' (p. 33). Holistic diagrams such as mandalas 'are one of the best examples of outputs from the human pattern-mechanism which can be played back into it' (p. 26).

If one treats Comfort's book as a 'case study' in present-day attempts at merging Eastern and Western thinking, one may wonder to what extent this venture into systems theory is truly free of the 'linear ideology of our own culture' which Comfort professes to criticize. One could even question whether the idea of 'the machinery with which we perceive pattern' reveals a mechanistic viewpoint, betraying Comfort's whole stance as an inclusive thinker.

He seems explicitly to reject crude mechanism. For example, he states that 'Anything with which I experience myself as fully continuous cannot easily be analogized as a machine, because a machine is by definition a not-I to be addressed by manipulation'

(p. 44). He is inclined to treat the nervous system as a 'black box' (p. 31) and, by and large, mental function is viewed holistically as a system transcending its varied parts, a view which is in keeping with the systems approach now making such an impact on life-science thinking.[7]

On the other hand, Comfort parts company with at least a large section of Indian thought by regarding the physical brain to be an indispensable part of awareness, such as when he speaks of our 'growing knowledge of the neural bases of experience and the consequent implausibility of disembodied intelligences' (p. 142). He is then cornered into having to regard the near-death experiences reported by Kübler-Ross,[8] and presumably any kind of out-of-body experience, as being 'illusions' (p. 139), ignoring the fact that they fit the Baconian exclusionary rules as satisfactorily as anything he is prepared to accept as not sheer illusion.[9]

Evidently Comfort's liberation from conservative scientific thought has not gone far enough for him to incorporate some very Baconian data available in the field of parapsychology or psychical research. His book is in fact saturated with a 'one-level naturalism'[5] or physicalism which prevents him from following out even his own line of thinking. For example, he states: 'The farther we pursue physics or neuropsychology or both, the more evident it becomes that the kind of universe we see as objective depends as much on the system which is doing the seeing as on what is there to be seen' (p. 46). But then, is not the 'implausibility', which he finds in the idea of 'disembodied intelligences', itself a result of his own cognitive 'system' having become fixated only on 'knowledge of the neural bases of experience'? An open-minded study of out-of-body experience, for example,[9] indicates the existence of non-physical or *non-neural* levels of experience. Consequently the idea of (physically) 'disembodied intelligences' seems far from 'implausible' in a correspondingly expanded, multi-level universe.[5]

Comfort's belief that experience must be physically and neurally based seems to arise from the kind of argument (if it can be called an argument) presented on his page 55: if self-experience 'is not magical or supernatural it must be neural'. But do the dismissive terms 'magical or supernatural' constitute a true alternative to 'neural'? Hardly! Yet this kind of 'argument' is by no means uncommon in the life and social sciences, with the result that one-level physicalism remains entrenched, and the gap between Western and a large section of Indian thought continues to be maintained.

Be this as it may, Comfort recognizes the importance of oceanic states in providing 'the ability to perceive an alternative approach to structure and a supplementary rather than competing paradigm of experience' (p. 43). This allows us 'to experience the degree to

which the "objective" macrocosm is in fact being patterned by the idiosyncrasy of our sense of identity' (p. 43). Contact is thus made with the Indian discovery that, in Comfort's words, 'the intuitive view of what is "objective", including time-as-sequence, is a conditional view, that its conditionality can be experienced, and that this experience is to be had by way of an operation on the sense of I-ness' (p. 117).

III

'An operation on the sense of I-ness' can fairly be called the major occupation of Indian religious thought, particularly of Buddhist thought. There seems to be a straightforward historical explanation why the West did not embark on this operation until the present. The Greek sense of practicality and Greek zest for life was, as Comfort points out, 'highly inimical to "detachment", Buddhist-style' (p. 50). Moreover, 'the Greek distrust of Oriental exoticism generally, made the illusory character of experience an unpopular philosophical postulate. Even the submersion of the Graeco-Roman world in Christianity kept sensory reality real — the world might be evil but it was not virtual or illusory, except perhaps for the Gnostics' (p. 50). Extensive surgery on I-ness and self is a very recent development in Western thinking, and still tends to be lacking in perceptiveness and boldness if judged by a recent large-scale exercise published under the title *The self and its brain*, by the philosopher Karl Popper and the neurophysiologist John Eccles.[10]

This book, which is not mentioned by Comfort presumably because of its recent publication, is concerned with the relation between body and mind — a field that the authors find to be 'exceedingly difficult', so much so that they 'think it improbable that the problem will ever be solved, in the sense that we shall really understand this relation' (p. vii). Popper suggests that 'being a self is partly the result of inborn dispositions and partly the result of experience, especially social experience' (p. 111). He does not accept the idea of a 'pure self', if 'pure' is taken to imply something 'prior to experience': he finds that self-identity is 'at least partly, of a surprisingly contingent character' (p. 114). Nevertheless, he rejects Hume's dismissal of the self as an imaginary 'bundle' of experiences, and favours Plato's 'idea of the mind as the pilot of a ship', or the idea of a 'ghost in the machine' (p. 109).

Yet, as Indian philosophy maintains and as Comfort points out, a closer look at this inner 'someone' may reveal 'not a ghost, but a kind of bottleneck in the circuitry' (p. 12). In fact, anything like a 'pilot of the ship' could turn out to be, in Comfort's words, more 'a

confusing factor underlying almost every human formulation about "external" events' (p. 82). Indeed, self-regarding I-ness is the very basis for generating 'external' events in the first place: as Comfort observes, 'The "illusion" (maya) conceived of both by Gnosticism and by Hinduism as generative of the perceived universe is, at root, the illusion of I-ness, the homuncular illusion . . . from which categories spring' (p. 111). Popper does indeed go as far as believing that 'the activity of selves' is 'the only genuine activity we know' (p. 120), but he does not go anywhere near as far as suggesting that the experienced world is actually contingent on self and mind: 'material objects' are taken as 'the paradigm of reality' (p. 11). Certainly, 'contents of thought' and 'products of the human mind' are held to be 'real'; they are taken to constitute a partly autonomous world of unembodied objects (World 3), in contrast to 'the world of mental states' (World 2) and 'the physical world' (World 1) (p. 38). Yet World 3 objects are treated as being contingent on World 1, not the other way round.

Popper and Eccles are certainly not alone among neurophysiologists in finding the mind-body problem 'exceedingly difficult': a major neurophysiologist, R.W. Sperry, recently wrote, 'How the brain mechanisms generate subjective conscious experience continues to pose the number one problem for brain research and one of the most truly mystifying unknowns in the whole of science'.[11] Yet an Eastern or phenomenological style of thinking would lead neurophysiologists to turn the question round, and ask not 'how the brain mechanisms generate subjective conscious experience', but how subjective conscious experience generates brain mechanisms as conceived by a neurophysiologist! We appear, at the beginning of the 1980s, still to be uneasy about thinking this way round. Nevertheless, it has become almost commonplace to remark, as Comfort does, that we are at present 'due for an exploration of "inner space" as painstaking as our exploration of outer' (p. 106). Yet there is little agreement among writers as to how this exploration should be carried out. Comfort's interest in Hinduism leads him to write that 'Tantrik exploration of inner space is based on at least as much experimentation, and almost as elaborate a technology, as objective astronomy — only it is psychotechnology expressed in yantras, rituals and an elaborate series of body image manipulations' (p. 112). He considers that systems theory and neurology 'indicate to the West that the ancient sadhus were describing real experiences, not arbitrary flights of imagination' (p. 112). Recognition of this will, he believes, 'create in both philosophy and science a rather different style from that of the nineteenth century, which more than any other fortified the primacy of I-ness as the most important human experience' (pp. 112–113).

The paradoxical results of scientific objectivism in physics have, of course, done a good deal of softening-up in this direction already.

The kind of systems theory and neurology that Comfort believes will create a 'different style' of thinking may be illustrated by his attempt to describe the mechanism of I-ness. The self-perceiving sense of I-ness is seen to be based on a kind of 'delay-generated echo' (p. 56), comparable with what happens if one watches oneself on closed-circuit television with a 0,5 second delay: 'the ghost of a second identity sometimes appears under these circumstances. This is quite possibly what we are doing all the time' (p. 56). Whatever the details of the neural circuitry, he suggests that 'there is a department of the brain which walks, as it were, a step behind nondiscursive perception, monitoring its performance, reclassifying its content, and functioning precisely as the "seer of seeing" — an abstractive override which, with its appearance in phylogeny as in ontogeny, constitutes man as a discursive and abstracting animal' (pp. 67–68).

Comfort is here using computer-based ideas in elaborating his model, but he endorses the suggestion of the neurophysiologist Karl Pribram that 'the brain functions not like a computer but like a hologram' (p. 59). Holography is a technique for producing remarkably solid-looking objects on photographic film. The film merely has an interference-pattern blur in ordinary light, but it shows a three-dimensional image when scanned by a laser beam. Comfort suggests that 'what we normally experience could be the scanned state of the interference-pattern generated in the brain by sensory inputs and by its own activity. In an oceanic or "I-less" mode of perception, the scan could be shut off, and what is intuited would then be the interference-pattern itself' (p. 59). When this happens, 'the processes connected with our sense of the objective would be of a piece with the rest of the hologram, and the positional "I" would in fact be seen as containing the information of the whole, like any other subdivided hologram. Switch on the scan again and separate objects and concepts would once more be seen as separate' (p. 59).

The details of Comfort's model are not at issue here: what is relevant is his suggestion of a consonance between mystical experience and current neurology. As he remarks, 'The idea of objective reality as representing interference pattern, most recently embodied in Karl Pribram's holographic model, is in fact an extremely ancient one. The interesting feature of its antiquity is that until holography rendered it mathematical, this model has always been intuitive, associated with "mysticism", and based on some experiental feature of oceanic experience' (p. 60). During oceanic experience 'the I is suppressed or seen as included in the holographic whole, with the corollary that since all parts of a hologram

contain its total pattern at a lower level of definition, the residual I-experience contains "reality" in microcosm' (p. 60). He concludes this discussion with a perceptive remark that 'We may be about to enter a general epoch of field theory models where topology replaces process. It is to less precise models of this kind that much oriental philosophy is attuned' (p. 63).

IV

Ideas such as these certainly are engaging and stimulating; stimulating to the extent of suggesting avenues of research that might even dispel the doubts of Popper and Eccles that the mind-body problem will ever be 'solved'. Indeed, these ideas and research prospects may be even a little too engaging, in that they tend to keep neurophysiological thinking fixated where it is, at one-level naturalism. Signs of this are plentiful in Comfort's book: for example, the enthusiastic statement on page 67 that 'Any philosophical problem of ontology therefore resolves itself into an analysis of how exteroceptive inputs are treated in the human brain'.

One may wonder to what extent 'oriental philosophy' would go along with this. Even most Western philosophers would be inclined to question whether 'exteroceptive inputs in the human brain' are primary, unambiguous data for ontology. In reviewing the question of a possible neurophysiological basis for epistemology, Whiteman has observed,[5] 'It is obvious in fact that if perception is "happenings in the brain", then perception of those happenings must consistently be "happenings" in another brain. Hence we are involved in a continual regress and never arrive at the study of perception itself' (p. 43). Similarly, any attempt to 'resolve' ontology into brain function merely drops the issue into a continual regress.

This is a penalty for aligning oneself too closely with the 'linear objectivist ideology of our own culture', an ideology with which Comfort seems to have something of a love-hate relationship. At some places he sees it as 'a systems break in our intellectual armour' (p. 19), at other places, such as the one previously quoted, it is seen as the path to ontological solutions. And yet, it is exactly this kind of ambivalence which makes Comfort's book so interesting as a 'case study' in the present mixing and merging of traditionally Eastern and Western thinking. Our Western 'ideology' has to its credit some spectacular intellectual achievements, and so we are encouraged, for instance, to 'go on in hard-nosed fashion to work out exactly what [mystical symbolisms] mean in terms of wiring, that being the mode of our culture, and a produc-

tive one never before applied to this archaic material' (p. 109). But the 'wiring' usually turns out to be so intricate, so demanding of research effort, and so engaging in its own right that we constantly run the risk of being unable to see the multi-level whole for the 'wires' at the one level, and we lose our way.

Yet, for all its shortcomings, at least our 'ideology' has built into it a self-correcting mechanism of re-testing and reappraisal, a mechanism so powerful that even a strongly held position can be undermined by its own development and growth, as nineteenth-century scientific objectivism was undermined (or transcended) this century by the growth of science itself. Running through Comfort's book is much of the turbulence, self-contradiction and real excitement that belongs to a phase of growth and self-transcendence. Anyone not taking the plunge into this turbulence with Comfort is surely missing a period of intellectual transformation without parallel in cultural history.

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DUSKLANDS AND 'THE IMPREGNABLE STRONGHOLD OF THE INTELLECT'*

by W.J.B. WOOD

Surfacing in some of the exchanges we have heard at this conference are critical differences that constitute a fundamental literary issue: what is it that we turn to the literary artist for? What is it that we value him or her for doing? What do we get out of the activity, the experience, of reading their work? There need not be consensus about the answers to such questions, nor would we expect there to be. But what bedevils much critical debate is the fact that we often seem to find ourselves at cross purposes with one another rather than disagreeing constructively and meaningfully. This seems to me a pity.

In a recent public exchange in the pages of *Speak*[1] we found John Coetzee and Ross Devenish, regrettably if inevitably, at cross purposes with one another over the Fugard/Devenish film *The Guest.* Among many contemporary intellectuals, Coetzee would be championed at the expense of Fugard. One of *Speak*'s correspondents, I recall, an expatriate South African, acclaimed Coetzee's as a relevant and liberating voice on the contemporary scene; Devenish's position was dismissed, as was his collaborator, in the phrase 'the sickly Fugard'. (Arrogance and value-judgements would, I suspect, be anathema to this correspondent — theoretically at any rate.) I myself, however, find the work of both Coetzee and Fugard impressive and stimulating. I decline, and I think we should all decline, to be driven into the position of acclaiming one at the expense of the other. I'm grateful to be teaching, and learning, through both.

Both Coetzee and Devenish, also in the pages of *Speak*,[2] were asked the kind of fundamental question to which I have alluded: what did they think theatre was 'for'? Devenish replied:

> Perhaps the most important thing that . . . literature can do is to place an individual in the position of seeing through another pair of eyes.

This you might say is a very simple point, the merest literary truism even. Yet for a literary work to do this, I would argue, is a highly complex and difficult achievement. And where an artist suc-

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ceeds in doing this, the implications individually and socially speaking strike me as being highly significant and valuable. Given the historical and contemporary human context which in so many ways is divisive and separatist, exclusive and excluding, this is surely something that the creative artist is almost uniquely in a position to do. He can promote a sense of community that cuts across all kinds of barriers with which we have to contend.

Coetzee replied by saying that whereas theatre and film — and I think we can extend his point to apply to literary works more generally — whereas some works

> reinforce the myths of our culture, others dissect these myths. In our time and place, it is the latter kind of work that seems to me more urgent.

This is a point to be taken, made as it is by the author of *Dusklands*, a remarkable and distinguished novel that is concerned to do, and to a large extent succeeds in doing, precisely this. Or perhaps it would be more accurate or appropriate to say (is there a Structuralist in the house?) that the novel confronts the reader with the need for, and it implicates the reader in the activity of, engaging critically in the recharting of the myths of our culture — some of the central myths of the Western world at any rate. Coetzee considers South Africa to be something of an historical backwater;[1] but on the strength of *Dusklands* and *In the Heart of the Country* alone, in so far as they are reaching a gradually increasing readership here and abroad, he has himself done much to render it less so.

But having said this, although I can accept the need and value of the subversive strategy at work in a novel like *Dusklands*, in terms of the dissecting of both colonialist and neo-colonialist myths, the charting of a disintegrating vision, and can likewise in some measure acclaim the new post-modernist possibilities opened up by a novel such as this one which subverts the realist and modernist novel (frequently with such wit too), I still have doubts and reservations concerning this achievement — in theory and in practice — and this paper is an endeavour to pose them, or throw them into signifying relief. I feel bound to question viewing the artist as mythographer, and the casting of the reader in the role of cartographer that this seems to encourage, or insist upon. What a reader becomes engaged in may, and possibly should, involve some critical cartography on his part, but surely the experience of reading is not only, or even essentially, that? This metaphor of the map, the charting of the contours of experience or consciousness, is one that intrigues and appeals to me, yet also prompts a reservation which I should like to formulate, relevantly as it seems to me,

having recourse to D.H. Lawrence. In the 'Study of Thomas Hardy' commenting on Clym Yeobright, he says:

> A little of the static surface he could see and map out. Then he thought his map was the thing itself . . . the map [can appear] more real than the land.[4]

The relation between map and terrain is what Lawrence seems to me to focus most appositely here: not only should they not be confused, but there is the sense in which the charting of the map becomes an activity that assumes questionable priority over experiencing the living terrain itself, an activity that is liable to distance us unduly from such experience. The importance and the implications of this issue are suggested by Lawrence in a formulation of his from a much later essay:[5]

> Belief is a profound emotion that has the mind's connivance . . .

This understanding of the place and the role of consciousness is a position I am interested to find endorsed by a leading contemporary poet — Ted Hughes — who sees the artist as struggling to bring into conscious focus experience that resides and originates within us below the level of consciousness.[6]

Now if one sees Coetzee and his work in this context, one finds that exploration of the structure of consciousness is indeed what he, on his own admission, is concerned with and good at; but this does not dispose of Fugard's passionate concern with actual living situations, his evocation of human relationships — the problematic human terrain itself is where he conducts his exploration. If Coetzee's work is insightful in one sense, the work of an artist such as Fugard is insightful in another.

I might add that I do not feel that the difference in genre is what is in question here although I do find it understandable and of some significance that Fugard should be a dramatist, Coetzee the novelist that he is. The monologue of the mind suits Coetzee's purposes best. But here, too, a reservation presses itself upon one if one can conceive of the novel as

> the perfect medium for revealing to us the changing rainbow of our living relationships.[7]

I feel bound to observe that for all the interesting new possibilities offered by the post-modernist novel, there are things that it no longer does and surely could still do — exploring the complexities of inter-relationship, the Self in its myriad relations to other

Selves. I should also want to add that, on the evidence of *Dusklands* itself, I feel John Coetzee is capable of undertaking this, although he has his reasons for choosing not to. To make my point another way, for all its subversive effect upon our consciousness, what I can't help feeling a work like *Dusklands* doesn't do (a claim that *could* be made for Fugard) is 'disturb the emotional and intuitive self'[8] and in this way force us to see something new, or anew.

Having said which, I should now like to invoke Lawrence alongside Coetzee to suggest a measure of common ground and concern between them. In the following quotation, however, the differences interest me as much as what they may be seen to share, and I'm especially struck by the caveat concerning what we may do with our reading, and by Lawrence's conception of creative endeavour as exploration of a liberating kind, not the power-seeking, possessive and assertive activity stressed by Coetzee — Lawrence who himself was profoundly concerned to diagnose, focus and promote a necessary disintegration of vision. In an essay entitled 'Books'[9] he writes:

> Are books just toys? the toys of consciousness? Then what is man? The everlasting brainy child? Is man nothing but a brainy child, amusing [we might interpolate here, or distressing] himself forever with the printed toys called books?

Lawrence admits to this proclivity for chess-like intellectual games — man is 'That also'. After this caveat he continues

> But there is more to it.
> Man is a thought-adventurer.
> Man is a great venture in consciousness . . .
> Man . . . has thought his way down the far ages. He used to think in little images of wood or stone. Then in hieroglyphs on obelisks and clay rolls and papyrus. Now he thinks in books between two covers . . .
> The worst of a book is the way it shuts up between covers . . .

(Coetzee with his structuralist sympathies would here concur — hence the strategy of *Dusklands*'s structure, an endeavour to heighten the open-endedness of its impact.) As Lawrence continues, it is possible to think, more specifically now, of the case of Eugene Dawn and Jacobus Coetzee.

> When man had to write on rocks and obelisks, it was rather difficult to lie. The daylight was too strong. But soon he took his venture into caves and secret holes —

[We can recall Eugene Dawn here, 'engaged in a liberating creative act', as he works 'in the basement of the Harry S. Truman Library. There, among the books, I sometimes catch myself in a state not far from happiness, *intellectual* happiness (*we in mythography are of that cast*) . . .' the stress here is mine.][10]

> But soon he took his venture into caves and secret holes and temples [the Temple of the Intellect?] where he could create his own environment and tell lies to himself . . . a book is an underground hole with two lids to it. A perfect place to tell lies in . . .[11]

For these comments to apply to Eugene Dawn or Jacobus Coetzee we would need to substitute for 'lies' and 'lying', illusion or self-deception. Both the colonial figure of Jacobus Coetzee, and his neo-colonial descendant Eugene Dawn, are the victims — Dawn himself is a casualty — of attempting to live in accordance with a suspect image of themselves. Both are figures, we are enabled to see, trapped within a revealing kind of power-structure; and we are allowed to perceive (in their respective ways) the destructive implications for each of them, in terms of their own self-hood, as well as in relation to the other selves in terms of whom they live. In each case the consequence of their supposed or would-be supremacy, which is actually a dependency upon the Exploiter/Exploitee structure, is a withdrawal into the Self — into a desolating kind of self-consciousness in fact.

There is devastating irony in Eugene Dawn's analysis in the 'New life for Vietnam' project. He finds himself urging as the necessary psychological strategy to adopt for victory over the Vietnamese, 'fragmentize, individualize'.[12] And this is to be accompanied by the annihilating bombardment of the country with Prop-12 in order to 'show the enemy that he stands naked in a dying landscape'. As he is writing this, the comment obtrudes: 'I have to pull myself together'.[13] His earlier would-be sustaining self-assertion, we recall, took the form of 'I am my work'.[14] We witness the truth of this! The loss of self-possession in terms of the writing of the report that this betokens, heralds a psychic breakdown. He is, we realize, himself fragmenting, becoming an isolated self whose consciousness can be viewed as a dying landscape. There is astringent pathos — black and bleak ironic humour — in the encouragement he gives to his doctors:

> I approve of the enterprize of exploring the self . . .
> I have high hopes of finding whose fault I am.[15]

A related kind of self-withdrawal we recognize as the fate of Jacobus Coetzee, too.

In order to keep intact his (an historically cherished) image of himself, once it has irrevocably been called into question through his experiences on the First Journey into the Land of the Namaqua people, he has to devastate those people and their community.

> Through their deaths I, who after they had expelled me had wandered the desert like a pallid symbol, again asserted my reality.[16]

This victory, as he sees it, exacts its price, however, for that 'reality' is found *not* to be what it was when he saw himself standing on the threshold of his encounter with the Namaquas for the first time. Then he could believe in himself, and take pride in the fact that 'the success of the expedition had flowed from my own enterprize and exertions'. Then the exercise of power sustained the Self. But the limitless exercise of his kind of power, finally, when he has his once faithful servant grovelling before him (we recall: 'They looked upon me as their father. They would have died without me . . .') results in no sustaining sense of triumph:

> Dejection and enervation settled over me and I moved away from him . . . The sun was high and no-one was warmed. Our horses edged right and left and right. The only sound was the cold whistling of images through my brain . . . There was nothing that could be impressed on these bodies, nothing that could be torn from them or forced through their orifices, that would be commensurate with the desolating infinity of my power over them.[17]

At the close of 'The Narrative of Jacobus Coetzee' we find him speaking with complete detachment about the prospect of his own death, a mere material bodily event. The 'cold whistling of images through his brain' continues, however:

> . . . if the worst comes to the worst you will find that I am not irrevocably attached to life. I know my lessons. I too can retreat before a beckoning finger through the infinite corridors of my self. I too can attain and inhabit a point of view from which, like Plaatje, like Adonis . . . like the Namaqua, I can be seen to be superfluous. At present I do not care to inhabit such a point of view. . .[18]

Jacobus Coetzee concludes, tellingly, by remarking 'I have other things *to think about*' (the stress is mine). I should append here,

with pointed ironic intention. *Cogito ergo sum* — such is the power of the Intellect, the Consciousness engaged in contemplating the Self. We find that his bodily self, his Self-in-the-World, is as much an object of contemplation as are those whom he killed.

This depiction and diagnosis which John Coetzee succeeds in implementing seem to me to be both suggestive or persuasive, but also problematic. The psychology of power that is shown to operate in the case of Jacobus Coetzee, as in the case of Eugene Dawn, as well as in American commitment to defeating Vietnam at all costs, makes — to put it mildly —a point. This need in men, throughout a crucial phase of history, and in terms, too, of a whole range of human relationships, to sustain a sense of the self through Masterful control, through possessive domination and exploitation — a quest for power that infuses human exploration and is made possible by technology in various forms (technology which testifies, we are reminded, to man's ability 'to breed out of [his] own head'[19]) — this is subtly and profoundly exposed for what it is: not the inherent creative human strength, the hallmark of self-sufficiency that it is assumed to be, but a desperate bid to conceal or compensate for a human deficiency, a sense of an inner void. We have a disturbing diagnosis of what Coetzee terms 'the malady of the master'.[20]

The way in which, to my mind, he focuses this best, is evident in scenes such as the one where, having arrived at the Namaqua village, and having failed to impress upon the community and its ailing chief the significance of his arrival in their midst, he realizes things are getting out of hand around his wagon. Having been made to feel that his masterful presence is ignorable, it is characteristic that he should observe, 'These people could be ignored'. He then finds they can't — they are helping themselves to more 'presents'. He lashes out with his whip, assumes a confident and authoritative stance, and threatens the throng with his gun. But then, uncowed, the crowd begin to hiss at him:

> I stood my ground . . . A woman stepped out of the crowd toward me. Her legs were straddled, her knees bent, her arms held out horizontally on either side. Over the drum-roll of the 'Ssss-' she twitched her whole body so that her fat naked breasts and buttocks shuddered. On each explosive '—sa!' her fingers clicked, her head jerked, her pelvis snapped at me . . .

In her dance she taunts his manhood:

> Through slit eyes she was smiling at me. Lifting my gun in one easy motion I fired into the ground at her feet. There

> was no echo and barely any dust, but the woman screamed with fright and fell flat. The crowd turned tail.[21]

Jacobus Coetzee's tone reveals his satisfaction in having effectively demonstrated his power and his manhood. But the scene actually serves to expose his entire dependency on his gun, and his impotence. There you have the 'malady of the master' graphically realized and pointed to.

The extent to which Eugene Dawn has contracted this malady is pointed to in a passage such as this:

> I am apprehensive about tomorrow's confrontation. I am bad at confrontations. My first impulse is to give in, to embrace my antagonist and concede all in the hope that he will love me. Fortunately I despise my impulses. Married life has taught me that all concessions are mistakes. Believe in yourself and your opponent will respect you. Cling to the mast, if that is the metaphor. People who believe in themselves are worthier than people who doubt themselves. People who doubt themselves have no core. I am doing my best to fashion a core for myself, late though it be in life. I must pull myself together. I believe in my work. I am my work.[22]

The attempt at self-assertion of the self-doubting self is what we hear in this voice which Coetzee can render wonderfully well. Dawn is making his kind of bid for power, but we (and he) are registering his impotence and inadequacy.

The 'gun and its metaphors, the only copulas we [know] of between ourselves and our objects'[23] receive extensive documentation in a pretty comprehensive diagnosis of this malady. These two 'explorers' penetrate with professedly creative purpose the interiors with which they respectively are confronted, external and internal landscapes that constitute 'dusklands', but they succeed only in destroying, devouring, leaving wastelands and waste-products in their wake. In so far as the novel extends in our minds the scope of the implications of this, it succeeds in offering an unanswerable dissection of a long-cherished Western myth concerning the creative virtues of Power and Authority and Exploration; it charts the nature, the implications and consequences of a disintegrative and disintegrating Western vision, and thereby becomes itself a 'liberating creative act', for author in one sense, for reader in another. Or does it?

I have tried very briefly and rather summarily to testify to something of the novel's suggestive and persuasive force. But what still remains problematic for me about this achievement is the suggestion that it prompts in me that there is another, or further, dimen-

sion of significance to be attached to this model of the dominant, assertive power structure which the novel is insistently concerned to underscore and to undermine, and in this respect the novel tends to reinforce and subscribe to this power-structure.

The closing pages of 'The Narrative of Jacobus Coetzee' I would suggest (in the comments already made on them), point to the problem by implication, and it seems to me to be explicitly raised in the first section of the book. For instance, in the extended passage last quoted, Eugene Dawn says, 'Fortunately I despise my impulses'. He also, we find, speaks in these terms:

> I sit in the depths of the Harry Truman Library, walled round with earth, steel, concrete and mile after mile of compressed paper, from which impregnable stronghold of the intellect I send forth this winged dream of assault upon the mothering earth herself.[24]

He also registers that 'I am the subject of a revolting body'.[25] Of his boss, Coetzee, Dawn comments: 'He thinks authoritatively. I would like to master that skill'[26] The irony intended here I take to be that of Dawn placing faith for his salvation in precisely what is responsible for undermining him. But *is* it just trust in this notion of Authority, and the self-sufficiency and self-vindication that it is assumed this will bring, that is the problem? Could not those despised impulses, and that body in revolt be understood as throwing into question the trust placed in Authority of another kind, that of 'the impregnable stronghold of the intellect'? To me Eugene Dawn represents not simply a case study of a casualty of the Colonial inheritance, but more broadly and fundamentally speaking, of the Cartesian inheritance (see footnote 27).

The way out of the plight to which Dawn's symptoms point, seems to me not solely to lie in liberation from a Colonialist-structured consciousness. And for this reason I am prompted to wonder whether there is not an (unintended) irony that extends, beyond his using of the phrase 'the liberating creative act', to the very structure and strategy which John Coetzee has offered us in this novel. On the evidence of the novel itself I find myself expecting its author to have more reservations, or at least some qualifications, concerning mythography as an artistic enterprise than, it seems, he does.

One further and final reservation by way of conclusion: admitting the relevance and acuteness of the diagnosis offered (as far as it goes) I cannot altogether concur that it deserves to dominate as it does the map that recharts our historical consciousness. (I speak now as an interested cartographer!) As a corrective strategy, perhaps one would not object: but, again, in so far as the work seems

quite carefully (it is astonishingly well-, and closely-knit) to exclude for the picture other possibilities where the Self could be seen *relating* to other selves on terms that are not those merely of the exploiter/exploitee and 'copula' kind,[28] I find the work no longer so satisfactorily diagnostic, but curiously symptomatic of the very thing which it purports to diagnose.

I am still reading and trying to come to terms with my reading of *Dusklands*, but the nature of the experience, while it keeps drawing me back, also makes me want to be liberated *from* what seem to me its confines. It is then that I turn to, say, Fugard — or to Lawrence — and 'I keep exploring'. But my quest then is not solely that of a cartographer nor, I hope, that of a self-bolstering power-seeker following in the footsteps of Jacobus Coetzee and Eugene Dawn.

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NOTES

1. *Speak: theatre arts journal*, vol. 1, no. 1, December 1977, pp. 4–9.
2. *Speak: critical arts journal*, vol. 1, no. 2, March/April 1978, pp. 3–4.
3. *Speak: critical arts journal*, vol. 1, no. 3, May/June, 1978, p. 23.
4. D.H. Lawrence, 'Study of Thomas Hardy', *Phoenix*, (Heinemann, 1961), pp. 418 and 420.
5. D.H. Lawrence, *'A propos of Lady Chatterley's lover' and other essays*, (Penguin, 1961), p. 94.
6. Ted Hughes, 'Learning to think', *Poetry in the making*, (Faber, 1969).
7. D.H. Lawrence, 'Morality and the novel' *Phoenix*, p. 532.
8. D.H. Lawrence, 'Introduction to these paintings', *Phoenix*, p. 576.
9. 'Books', *Phoenix*, pp. 731–732 *passim*.
10. John Coetzee, *Dusklands*, (Ravan Press, Johannesburg, 1974), p. 4 and p. 6.
11. Books, *Phoenix*, p. 732.
12. *Dusklands*, p. 25.
13. ibid., p. 31.
14. ibid., p. 2.
15. ibid., p. 51.
16. ibid., p. 113.
17. ibid., p. 108.
18. ibid., p. 114.
19. ibid., p. 28.
20. ibid., p. 86.
21. ibid., p. 79.
22. ibid., pp. 1, 2.
23. ibid., p. 18.
24. ibid., p. 30.
25. ibid., p. 7.
26. ibid., p. 32.
27. The psychology of power, the model that recurs in various forms and human situations throughout this novel, is intended by John Coetzee to be seen, I take it, as characteristic, in fact symptomatic, of the *colonial* consciousness and its inheritance. Yet for me it signifies, in so far as it resembles so closely *Sartre*'s understanding of what intersubjective relationships entail, as the outcome, the symptom, and the inheritance, of Cartesian thinking. No one, I

imagine would argue that these existentialists and imperialists are all the same! This being so, the invoking here of Sartre constitutes a serious qualification to Coetzee's stance and diagnosis, and it reinforces my sense of the novel being in this respect perhaps more significant as symptom than diagnosis. There is a further dimension to the ironic use of the phrase 'the liberating creative act' which invites us to apply it not just to Eugene Dawn's, but his creator's activity too. They differ in degree rather than in kind, and a Cartesian critique, as far as I can see, is what this invites.

28. Sartre has been criticized on the same score. See Marjorie Grene, *Introduction to existentialism*, (University of Chicago, 1970), 'Sartre and Heidegger: The self and other selves'.

UNIVERSITY DEMOCRACY

by JOHN NIEUWENHUYSEN

In his travels, Gulliver once visited the academy of Lagado, an institute of advanced studies. He recorded that research at Lagado included attempts to extract sunbeams from cucumbers; to calcine ice into gunpowder; and to soften marble for pillows. There were only a few students present: the blind man had several blind apprentices who assisted him in mixing colours for painters; the scholar composing books by machine had several undergraduate assistants; and the professor of mathematics, who had discovered a new pedagogical technique, taught pupils by making them swallow wafers, on which were printed propositions and proofs.

This short article[1] is in a sense a return to Lagado, since it seems rarefied if not unreal to speak of university democracy, in the sense of greater involvement in decisions for university staff and students, whereas other more fundamental issues — the right of the university itself to admit whom it pleases, for example — remain in the background. But members of universities spend their time working within an internal power structure in which they have varying degrees of participation in decision making processes. Especially when the outcomes of those decisions are found by some to be frustrating, or when they appear unjust or discriminatory, calls for greater participation in decision making are heard. And when these calls are not heeded, and there are continuingly unpopular decisions, the absence of participatory democracy can serve as a serious impediment to scholarship and teaching, as the work environment festers. Although, therefore, relative to some other issues in South Africa (such as universal suffrage) the theme of internal university democracy is tangential, it is nonetheless important to the working lives of staff and students in universities, and consequently to their enjoyment of and productivity in their tasks.

As a further preface, the author may be somewhat anecdotal. Until some six or seven years ago, like so many other academics (including those at the University of Natal) he had lived beneath the professor/God syndrome, with a permanent professorial head of department. Indeed so fully was this spirit entered into that the author edited jointly a *festschrift* in honour of his chairman of department and professor who retired in 1971. Catching very well the atmosphere of this regime, the note of appreciation by a colleague included the following sentences: 'He trusted *his* staff and they valued his wise advice and judgement. More than anything else, however, they valued his concern for their welfare and advancement. He was always accessible and, no matter how busy he was,

their personal problems had top priority. He became in fact a kind and understanding *father* to the department, a *stern father* sometimes, but this was soon forgotten, or perhaps more likely, remembered with affection' (emphasis added).

It was with this paternalistic flavour in departmental administration as background that the university in which the author works in Australia (M for short)[2] in 1973 adopted a new system whereby, instead of having only professors as department heads, there should be elections for chairman; and senior lecturers and above would be eligible for nomination. This change was accompanied by various others, all serving to increase the degree of staff and student participation in university decision making processes.

In this article, the moves towards participatory democracy in M university are described; and some of the advantages and disadvantages accruing are mentioned. This is not intended to be an exercise in parochiality, for the decision making processes in M university prior to the 1973 changes bear a striking resemblance to those in South African universities, including Natal. The moves briefly described here may therefore serve as a model for those interested in change to contemplate if not act upon.

In 1973 M university adopted a simple but radical change in its internal government — a new department statute. This followed lobbying by the Staff Association, a favourable response from a sub-committee of the Professorial Board (or Senate) set up to investigate the issue; and (surprisingly) the adoption of the proposal for a new statute by the Professorial Board and Council.

The new statute formally recognizes the existence of the department as the primary academic unit; and provides for the appointment by Council of a chairman of department after a receipt of nomination from the full-time academic staff of the department. Chairmen may be appointed from among department members with the status of senior lecturer or above and the appointment is not to be for a period in excess of three years in any one instance.

It was left for the departments to fill in further details of their administrative processes (for example, the status of the department meeting relative to the chairman's powers, the frequency of elections, and so on).

At the same time, a dean's statute was enacted, permitting senior lecturers and above to be elected to deanships.

Following the department and dean statutes, membership of the Professorial Board (Senate) remained open to professors but included as well non-professorial deans and heads of departments. In view of its changed composition, this body was renamed the Academic Board.

In 1976 Council introduced a system of formula budgeting which allocates the university budget to twenty-two divisions (including

faculties). The responsibility for determining the allocation of faculty budgets to departments (formerly a central administration responsibility) now devolves back onto faculties. Faculties are managed by the faculty meeting, which is composed of all academic staff, with student representatives. But the ordinary business of faculty on a day to day basis is conducted by faculty executive and budget committees which report to faculty decisions for approval or rejection, and which are composed (usually) of department chairman *ex officio* and representatives elected by faculty.

A further institutional change to be noted involved the establishment of a University Assembly. In May 1971, M university (and others in Australia) experienced disturbing displays of student violence, stemming from dissent at conscription for the Vietnam war. These flowed on to disruptive demonstrations against public figures who visited the campus, and against the administration itself. The resulting enquiry recommended the establishment of a university forum for continuing discussion and evaluation of university issues. It met first in 1974, with 114 elected members (44 sectional, mainly faculty members, and 70 general representatives) elected on the common roll principle from the university community, encompassing all academic and support staff, all students and graduates of the university. Students are now represented also on Council, the Academic Board, faculties and departments.

In order to assess the advantages of the new system, it is necessary to ask: what were the disadvantages of the old, at the various levels of university decision making?

At the department level there were obvious disadvantages for staff in the old system. (Some of these disadvantages may be familiar to members of South African universities, including Natal). First, there was the problem of having to tolerate at the department level authoritarianism of varying degrees. Professors who were heads of department for the duration of their appointment could be autocrats, stifling academic and organizational initiative in a variety of ways. Of course, there were many benevolent autocrats, and there were also those who sought to operate by consensus. But the selection processes seemed inadequate to the formidable challenge of providing departments with permanent professorial heads who possessed suitable administrative capacity. Departments could labour for decades under a completely inept administrator. The knowledge that this was a 'permanent' fate was known to lead in some cases to academic atrophy. It was, in the view of many, in any event unfair to expect one individual to provide administrative leadership for periods that sometimes stretched up to four decades. Even if selection procedures which counted administrative skill as one of the talents necessary for a professorial appointment were to produce a suitable head for *that*

time, there was no guarantee that the same person would be equally well qualified in changed circumstances ten, twenty, thirty, or even forty years hence.

Under the new dispensation, this has been changed, and the person regarded as most suitable by the department at any given time serves as chairman. It is also usual under the new system that the chairman's powers are more limited, and that the decisions are evolved more by consultation, than under the old. Admittedly, this is not an unmixed blessing, since the tyranny of the majority can prevail; the processes of reaching consensus by consultation and through department meetings can be painful and time consuming; and rivalries in the pursuit of what power attaches to the chairman's post can be divisive.

However, it can be claimed overall that the new department statute at M university has been a success. In support of this, the results of a survey recently published in the Australian universities' quarterly *Vestes* may be mentioned.[1] Among the achievements claimed by the large majority of respondents were the following: (1) there had been some improvement in the standard of department administration; (2) there had been substantial betterment in relations among academic staff; (3) there had been considerable improvement in the degree of self-government at the department level, i.e. in the formation and execution of department policy by department members; (4) there had also been more participation at the faculty level, especially with the decentralized budgetary system; and (5) while opinions varied as to whether the new statute resulted in professors now concentrating on academic rather than administrative leadership, it was felt that short-term appointments to headships made a zestful approach possible, with momentum year in and year out being achieved.

Much the same comments already made about the department statute and its consequences apply as well to those following the new dean (or faculty) statute. Whereas previously faculty administration was a remote matter, the new arrangements have brought far greater involvement in decision making for faculty members. This has been brought about not merely by the possibility of electing non-professors to the deanship, and of the widened membership of faculty executive and budget committees, but more particularly by the new decentralized budgetary system, in which faculties determine the financial allocations for their constitutent departments, after receiving an allotment from the centre. Faculty meetings these days (and especially budget meetings) are far less likely than previously to be languorous, rubber stamp occasions.

At the level of decision making beyond faculties and departments, the M university changes have had a flow-on effect for the Professorial Board (which, as mentioned, is now called the Aca-

demic Board). But this effect has brought only marginal advantages for general staff participation, and for the decline of elitism, in university affairs. For while there has been something of a 'revolution' in the departments and faculties, the Academic Board remains a rather exclusive bastion. The non-professorial (chairman of department) members of the Academic Board are only temporary. With a large membership of about 150, the Academic Board is in effect managed by powerfu' sub-committees on which it is extremely difficult for non-professors to obtain membership. Moreover, as regards the power of the professoriate, it must be recalled that a reasonable proportion of elected chairmen are professors (some 44 percent in 1976 were professors).

Above all, in considering the growth of 'internal self-government' at M university, it must be remembered that the University Council remains as remote and powerful as ever. Student and general staff representatives on Council have failed to dent the 'closed and distant shop' image of Council. The continuing strength of Council, and the retained elitism of the Academic Board, which together make for a cabal *uber alles*, should be remembered in weighing the extent of 'participatory democracy', which is confined mainly to department and faculty management. Obviously, it is easier to introduce internal self-government in the more micro-economic settings of departments and faculties. Cynics might add, of course, that this is not the devolution of 'real' power.

An important flow-on effect of the dean and department statutes has been felt in the composition of selection committees. In most departments, there has been considerable democratization of lectureship and tutorship selection processes. Previously, it was customary for small groups of professors to decide on appointments to lectureships (with the head of department holding substantial influence). Today lectureship selection committees are usually reasonably large (ten or more people) and the majority of members would be non-professors. As regards tutorships, it was previously the practice for the head of department to decide on appointments without any obligatory consultation with colleagues and without advertisement. Now tutorships in most departments are advertised and a department committee whose composition is determined (as with lectureships) by the department meeting, makes the decisions. The usual objection to this practice — that it is likely to jeopardize the confidentiality of proceedings — has not been sustained by my experience. At least it can be said that the new procedures — including those for chairs, mentioned below — are not noticeably less confidential than the old.

Chair selection processes have also been altered under the new dispensation. There are now faculty elected representatives on every chair committee. Usually, members of the department in

which the chair is placed will feature prominently in this representation, enabling the committee to have some flavour of opinion from those with whom a new professor will work. This arrangement is a change from the elitism of previous times where such matters were decided in a setting divorced from (and often entirely unfamiliar with) the stage on which the consequences were to be played out.

The University Assembly has so far not exerted a great deal of influence. It resembles in many ways a talking shop, and stands in danger (in my view) of going the way of all constituent assemblies which have no executive authority. These bodies tend to become known as carpers rather than doers; and one fears that critics will be able to point to the Assembly as a device instituted by the university establishment to syphon off dissatisfaction into fruitless debate. On the other hand, those with more intimate knowledge of the Assembly may be able to point to some tangible consequences of its deliberations of which this author is unaware.

The Assembly, as mentioned before, was a university response to student unrest over the Vietnam war and conscription in the early 'seventies. Its record so far emphasises how hard it is to obtain effective student participation in university decision making processes. The difficulty in achieving this participation is probably analogous to the disabilities experienced by the migrant labour force in the South African economy: the turnover is too rapid, and the base too unviable and hard to organise, to achieve a strong voice. It is only when tempers have really been aroused — such as over the side effects of Vietnam — that student participation has been carefully considered.

On the other hand, apart from the Assembly, some progress has been made at M university under the new dispensation in permitting the more effective advocacy of the student viewpoint. This has come about through student representation on faculty and department meetings (at the discretion of the faculties and departments), and in Council and the Academic Board. Some important changes in course offerings, for example, have been initiated through student representation. And its influence has made departments far more aware than before of the need to constantly review teaching performance. Machinery for formal consultation on courses and methods of teaching and examination has begun to emerge in different faculties and departments as a consequence of this new influence.

This article has described reasonably modest changes in a particular setting. However its import is not intended to be one of parochial description. Instead, it is hoped that members of other universities, in which different (more traditional) systems prevail, may find the changes described at least of interest, if not a model

upon which to base thinking for the future of their own institutions.

Two points may be emphasised in conclusion. Firstly, the simple but crucial amendments to the department and dean statutes at M university have altered enormously the habits and atmosphere of personal inter-relationships and work practices in the departments and faculties. Change is in the air; there is more widespread participation in department and faculty decision making; innovation is occurring; and professors released (willingly or unwillingly) from the burden of 'permanent' administration, are more free to make an academic contribution. On the other hand, while there is movement, more open government, and greater individual participation at the department and faculty levels, the traditional centres of university power — the Council and Academic Board — remain remote, relatively untouched, and overridingly strong, with the voice of students perhaps the least heard and the least heeded.

Secondly, the changes have obviously not been without stress. In particular, some professors have not taken lightly the loss of authority to which they had aspired or had become accustomed. Questions have been asked as to how 'academic leadership' can be given, as required of professors, without administrative power; and derogatory remarks about the intellectual capacities of non-professorial chairmen have been heard. On the other hand, as one professor interviewed in the survey mentioned above put it, these costs of change 'are transient compared with the potential benefits. The whole structure is evolving enabling academics to be free in the best sense, i.e. each person has the opportunity to contribute'.

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NOTES

1. Based on a University lecture delivered at the University of Natal, Durban, on May 18, 1979.
2. It seems preferable to preserve some anonymity in print, partly to prevent undue parochiality in tone and partly also because the description of events at M university is mirrored more or less strongly at a number of other Australian universities.
3. E.C.McL. Holmes, *Vestes*, June 1978.
4. ibid.

BLUEPRINT FOR ALIENATION

EDUCATION IN SOUTH AFRICA[1]

by K.A. DOVEY

At present I detect in the Press, and in the general public, a degree of optimism concerning the changes Mr P.W. Botha is going to bring about in this country. I remain sceptical for a number of reasons, one of which is that I doubt whether the belief system — hegemony — which permeates our society and which unconsciously supports the established system, is capable of accommodating real change. In this connection we can refer to Seymour Sarason and his use of the maxim that 'the more things change, the more they remain the same' (Sarason, 1971). He accounts for this by explaining that unless lower order officials, whose task it is to implement change, clearly comprehend the change and unless they are in fact psychologically willing to implement change, nothing changes. He gives many examples of this phenomenon in education and in psychology and we can see examples of it in the current South African context. Political prisoners die in custody although the minister of police claims that he does not advocate such brutal measures; military trainees die, or are abused, in training while the heads of the various sections of the defence force deny that they tolerate sadistic behaviour from their non-commissioned officers. 'The more things change, the more they remain the same', is essentially true in South African education too. Unless principals and teachers clearly comprehend changes that are decreed from above, and unless they are psychologically willing to implement them, in practice nothing changes.

But I may seem to be getting off the point, because we haven't heard Mr Botha say anything about changes in White education. He has said quite bit about changes in other places, from which I assume that he is happy with education for Whites as it is. In view of this I would like to look at the published aims of White education policy and at the mentality of those people who make this policy and then look at the kinds of changes which the lower order officials i.e. teachers, principals and inspectors, are capable of implementing.

Essentially, in crude terms, the aim of the educational system is to indoctrinate White children with the Christian National value system and view of life, and to insulate them from what the HSRC calls 'foreign ideologies'. The HSRC Report 0–1 of 1972 states that, 'formative education is a vehicle for moulding the conscience according to the South African hierarchy of values', and that the

Christian, and an Educational facet'. The National component is described as 'an education with a national stamp and based on national values and norms', which should 'inculcate the aspiration in the White population to guard its identity'; the aim of the Christian component is that 'ultimately the education of each child in RSA should be such that he will acknowledge the authority of God who has placed us here'; and the aim of the Educational component is that 'education which is primarily Christian and National in character will mean that South Africans will be satisfied with nothing less than that their children should be moulded as future citizens' (HSRC, 1972, p. 122). HSRC Report 0–16 of 1975 claims that, 'education should mould children not only to the acceptance and acquisition of particular norms, but also to the rejection, by the child, of values and norms which are offensive to the adults who are responsible for his education' (HSRC, 1975, p. 64). The Transvaal Education Department is even more explicit about these aims. Moreland and Vermeulen, speaking at a TED in-service course in 1975, stated that the aim of Christian National education is 'to convince the young person, by means of education, to such an extent, of the contents of our own particular outlook on life, that he will be able to avert the onslaughts of foreign ideologies by choosing against them. He must be able to distinguish between what is his own and what is foreign' (Moreland and Vermeulen, 1975, p. 7). At the same in-service course, in recommending the Christian National philosophy of life, they told teachers that: 'A philosophy of life is that platform, that foundation of every human being's convictions, that something in him, which makes him make a decision about every problem, without thinking about it' (ibid., p. 6).

The HSRC plays an important role in that it 'conjures' up the so-called 'research' which acts as a theoretical underpinning for education in South Africa. In incorporating words like 'science' and 'research' into the name of this body, it appropriates through association the status that scientific research has in society, and thereby prevents scrutiny of its real purposes. Names can be deceptive. What I am implying is that little of what is conducted at the HSRC in the name of education can be classed as scientific research. Recently Professor van Trottenberg of the University of Klagenfurt in Austria was out here at the invitation of the Department of National Education. It seems that the assumption behind Professor van Trottenberg's invitation was that, as a good Calvinist, he would reinforce the Department's policies. They misjudged the man this time for when asked during a private function in Pietermaritzburg what his impression of the work of the HSRC had been, he replied that he hadn't seen much research conducted there but that he had been impressed with it as a social bookkeep-

ing agency. He also pointed to the irony that South Africa, as an adamantly anti-communist country, used methods of education very similar to those he had observed during lecture-tours of Eastern European countries: there was the same concern to insulate the system from foreign ideologies; the same bandying of slogans; and the same attempt to indoctrinate the children within an educational system with the 'official' ideology of the country.

An interesting aspect of the HSRC is its actual control over educational research in this country. A postgraduate student in the Faculty of Education on this campus wrote last year to the HSRC requesting information from their data bank on research conducted in this country on the 'status of women in education'. He received a reply stating that the HSRC had already undertaken complete and detailed research in this area and that this information was confidential and could not be made available for research purposes. This year a lecturer in the same faculty wrote for information on any research that had been conducted in the area of the teaching of mathematics to black children. The reply to her request was almost a duplicate of that sent to the Masters student: 'unfortunately the HSRC is already undertaking a survey, it is at an advanced stage and covers the aspects you intend to do research on. These findings cannot be made available to you as they are confidential and are used for planning purposes only'. The lecturer replied to this letter, pointing out that her enquiry was very broad and that she had not stated specifically the areas of her intended research — so how, she asked, could they know whether or not such research had been covered. To this she received no reply.

Going back to the line of complicity, as I see it, between the HSRC, the government, and the provincial education departments, in their aim to maintain an educational system which is insulated from what they call 'alien norms', it is clear that to insulate an educational system there are two basic requirements: control over 'who' teaches, and over 'what' is taught in the schools. The recent legislation requiring the compulsory registration of all White teachers with the South African Teachers Council for Whites, is one attempt to establish control over 'who' teaches in the schools. If teachers refuse to register they cannot be given permanent full-time positions and they are liable to a fine of R100 and three months' imprisonment. Furthermore, registering involves pledging to *honour* and obey the laws of the country.

I see the recent introduction of the merit system as yet another means of control over 'who' teaches in the system. The third section of the merit evaluation of teachers looks at their contribution to 'the community'; so attempting to control their behaviour within and beyond the boundaries of the school. The increasing bureaucratization of school settings has led to a rigid prescription

of the 'role' of the teacher; this appropriation of the teacher's 'self' by the state makes the teacher's life almost entirely official or public. This can lead to the reification of the role of the teacher with the result that teachers no longer take personal responsibility for their actions — these are perceived as their 'duty'. We have all heard the statement 'What can I do — I can only act in this manner because of my position'. Erich Fromm describes Eichmann as 'the perfect bureaucrat who transformed all life into the administration of things' (Fromm, 1964, p. 42). Another psychological consequence of such tight control over the behaviour, attitudes and values of teachers, is the development of a marked degree of powerlessness within them. Nietzsche (1956), discussing the consequences of personal powerlessness uses the term *ressentiment* to describe the inversion of values that occurs when one cannot be honest, even to oneself, about one's powerlessness in a situation. A transformation of one's value system occurs so as to make a virtue of one's weakness. A principal or teacher who cannot live an authentic and independent life, and who cannot admit this to him/herself inverts the value and makes a virtue of conformity. Those pupils who can live an independent creative life will be maliciously reacted upon for they are mirroring the teacher's repressed weakness.

The second requirement for the insulation of an educational system is control over 'what' is taught. A tight control over the curriculum and the syllabuses already exists, but the HSRC now recommends that, 'all textbooks for schools be written by committees organized by the HSRC' and that 'such a practice entails that one textbook be written for each standard and subject field and that this textbook be used exclusively by all departmental and subsidised schools' (HSRC, 1975, p. 66). In other words there should be total control over the information that is presented in books in schools. The report also states that all other books, library books included, are to be evaluated by these committees before they may be made available to pupils.

As I see the situation at the moment, the only possible loophole in the whole system is to be found in the university teacher-training departments. (The provincial education departments control the teacher training colleges.) However I see an increasing pressure being brought to bear on these university departments to conform to the Christian National viewpoint. Apart from the fact that many faculty lecturers, in this country, are caught up subconsciously in the hegemony of the dominant group, there remains the strong financial hold which the government has over these faculties. Not only would these faculties lose most of their students if the provincial departments stopped giving loans to the students, but the faculties would also lose the huge subsidy which the

government gives for each postgraduate student. Whether the universities will act with integrity or submit to Christian National pressure, remains to be seen.

I have attempted to describe, as I see them, the moves taken by the government to insulate the school system from outside ideas or influences. Once such an idiosyncratic universe has been established there still remains the problem of 'keeping the insiders in' (Berger and Luckmann, 1967). In a system which is extremely vulnerable, *conformity* becomes the highest value. The most pathological condition of deviance, in the Christian National system, is thus 'differentness'. Those children in the schools who are 'different', become the targets of the National Guidance Service which was legislated in 1967 with the stipulation that it should have the same outlook on life and view of humanity as the educational system. Swanepoel makes this quite explicit in his advice to teachers at a TED in-service course on guidance: 'the different or unusual form of behaviour *whatever it may be*, implies a way of behaviour different from the proper, and draws the attention of other children or of adults' (Swanepoel, 1975, p. 3 [my italics]). Recognizing the different child appears to present no problem. According to Moreland and Vermeulen of the TED: 'You can observe or expect the symptoms in children who are obviously different, if you know what an ordinary pupil looks like and how he reacts, and what a pupil who is not an ordinary child, looks like and how he reacts' (Moreland and Vermeulen, 1975, p. 4). For years we have lived with Christian National paranoia. We've had a vocabulary abounding in various kinds of 'gevaar' and few stones have been left unturned in the national search for 'gevaars'. Well the search has gone into the classroom now, looking for a 'different' child under every desk. Swanepoel warns the educator to be on his toes because some of these 'different' pupils are capable of disguising their 'differentness': 'this kind of pupil wants to be inconspicuous, but this kind of inconspicuousness, as a matter of fact, makes him conspicuous, makes the educator wonder, and therefore he is concerned about the inconspicuous conspicuous child' (Swanepoel, 1975, pp. 2–3).

I have quoted extensively from TED literature, but there have been equivalent changes occurring in NED policy. 'Youth Preparedness' began in the Transvaal but was later implemented in Natal as 'Civic Responsibility'. NED Circular 3 of 1973 has a long preamble as to the reasons this programme should be called 'Civic Responsibility' and not 'Youth Preparedness' in Natal. It stipulates that the CR programme should be implemented by the guidance counsellor and that the activities announced in circular 49 of 1972, should be seen as an enrichment of the programme viz. 'first aid, training in safety measures, map reading, orderly

movement and assembly, fire-fighting and prevention for both boys and girls, field exercises, musketry, guard of honour, bugle band, an elementary assault course for schools which elect to offer it, and home nursing'. This appears to me to be a concern with the preparation for war.[2]

The rate of change in Natal schools has been slower than in other provinces largely for the reason mentioned at the beginning of this lecture: lower order officials have to be able to comprehend the changes ordered, and they have to be psychologically willing to implement them, for change to occur in practice. In the past many Natal teachers and principals have had different views on education to those apparently held now by the NED, but it appears to me that recent products of our school system who are now themselves teachers, are far more capable of understanding and implementing the changes required by Christian National Education. I predict that the process of implementation will speed up in the future.

The long-term effects of an educational policy which insulates pupils from 'foreign' ideas and which pathologises 'differentness' may be seen in the context of Stuart Hampshire's (1959) two stated requirements for the creative growth of a nation. The first requirement is the ability to nurture, or at least tolerate, those 'different' individuals who are able to identify different aspects of reality. Such insights may be scientific, artistic, or whatever. These creative individuals are frequently marginal in the social sense in that their socialization has been problematic, with the result that they are able to see through social conventions which blinker the well socialized person from recognizing new possibilities. There are many examples of creativity resulting from incomplete socialization. We can see it in academic disciplines — the history of scientific invention shows clearly that the most creative scientists are people who moved at a relatively late stage of their lives into the field in which they made their discoveries. Their insight was often due to their not having been socialized into seeing the field with the conventional psychological set. Literary, artistic and musical history abounds with such socially marginal people who have lived eccentric lives but have contributed creatively to their country and the world through the insight that such marginality facilitated. Probably the insights which have had the greatest impact upon the world in the past century, were provided by German Jews — Freud, Marx, and Einstein — whose 'marginality' in that society during this period is now legend.

The second condition that Hampshire argues is necessary for the creative growth of a nation, is international co-operation through the sharing of ideas, languages, values, and ways of perceiving the world. In this way a broadening of outlook and an awareness of new possibilities occurs. Lancelot Hogben (1936) gives an excel-

lent example of this process in his outline of the historical growth of mathematics. The Greeks had difficulty with division because of the clumsiness of their number system, but their mathematics progressed once they came into contact with the Hindu number system. Thereafter, he argues, it took two social revolutions to boost mathematical creativity — the protestant revolution in Central Europe which laid the foundations for mass education, and the French revolution which produced a new mathematical notation, the decimal system, which formed the basis for computerization and space travel. The American social system and its resources finally utilized all the findings of other nations and put a person on the moon. Mathematical progress thus exemplifies the power of international co-operation and the sharing of ideas.

The South African educational system, as I have described it, fails dismally on both of Hampshire's conditions. It is making a pathology of individual difference and has initiated a powerful guidance and clinical service to eliminate it. Secondly it is rapidly insulating the White schools from any outside ideas — only those of the Christian National 'universe' are to be tolerated. As I see it, our educational system is alienatory and will ultimately lead to national stagnation.

I have thus far addressed myself entirely to White education. We have recently heard much of the millions of rands to be spent building new Black schools and training Black teachers. In my opinion, unless real changes occur in the content and philosophy of Black education, nothing will change. I believe that over the years the hegemony of the dominant group has permeated the Black unconscious to the same degree that it has infiltrated the unconscious belief system of Whites. The basic principles of CNE have been accepted with the difference that instead of the reification of Christian National culture we have the reification of the Zulu, Xhosa, or other, culture. Recently a Black committee of enquiry into education in Soweto rejected the principle of integrated education on the grounds that only Black culture should be studied. Students at the Federal Theological Seminary in Pietermaritzburg rejected studying Carl Rogers in educational psychology because they don't want any 'American ideas'. This can be described as a reaction to the 'colonial' alienation that has operated in education in this country for a long time, and which has negated our own African experience and recognized only those ideas which originated in the 'mother' countries. However, as I see it, a shift has now occurred from this latter position to its polar opposite — now, it is claimed, only our own experience is valid and we should insulate ourselves from the experience and ideas of any other nation. This appears to be the position that Black educationalists, like their White counterparts, are taking in South Africa.

A spirit of enquiry is as foreign to Black schools as it is to White schools. Black pupil motivation is similarly dominated by the clamour for certification, competition, and personal ambition. Lessons on 'Inkatha' are becoming part of the curriculum in the same way that 'civic responsibility' has become part of the White curriculum; Black teachers are pressurised into joining 'Inkatha' and, as I understand the situation, like White teachers spend most of their energy in protecting their position in the bureaucracy rather than in risking themselves in initiating any kind of educational enquiry. Black traditions and prejudices are reified in the same way as Whites have reified their traditions. In an incident at the Federal Theological Seminary last year a visiting American lecturer, Professor Howard Klinebell, was applauded by the Black audience when he spoke of political liberation: when he moved on to women's 'liberation', however, the Black males shouted him down. In reifying their culture they cannot see the human origins of Black male chauvinism and the suffering it causes; yet, at the same time, they cannot understand the inability of Whites to see the human origins of White racism and the suffering caused by it. 'What is part of our tradition and our culture is natural and good', becomes the cry of Whites and Blacks alike.

The future of this country appears bleak. Long after Christian Nationalism and apartheid have gone, the people of this land will still be suffering under the burden of their legacy. To nourish hope in the educational field, we must look to the university teacher-training departments which are not directly controlled by the government. These education faculties have a great responsibility: not only to the White students training to be teachers, to make them aware of the situation into which they are going, but also to the Black teachers who have been denied official access to these departments. I think that we have an unofficial obligation to set up extension courses which stimulate and refine the critical thought of Black and White teachers to try to overcome what I see as the naïve consciousness of teachers in this country. Whether these university education faculties acknowledge this responsibility, will be recorded by the historians of the future.

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NOTES

1. This article is based on a University Lecture delivered at the University of Natal, Pietermaritzburg, on Wednesday, October 3, 1979.
2. On the evening before the above lecture was delivered, i.e. on October 2, 1979, the TED in conjunction with the SA Defence Force held a military spectacle at Loftus Versveld of cadets, mass gymnastics and military bands. 5 000 young people between the ages of 7 and 19 participated, and 50 000 spectators were there to celebrate the day marked 'Youth Day' of 'Preparedness Year'. The TED also commissioned an opera entitled *The Assault* to commemorate the occasion. See *Wits Student* of October 19, 1979 for full report.

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SHAKESPEARE AND MONTAIGNE:
A TENDENCY OF THOUGHT

by T. OLIVIER

For nearly two hundred years, from Capell in 1780 down to Robert Ellrodt in 1975, the *Essays* of Montaigne have been felt as an influence on Shakespeare and have consequently been toothcombed for parallels between the two writers. Hundreds have been suggested and elaborate claims made, but many, if not most, are probably due to commonplaces and proverbial sayings of the time as J.M. Robertson pointed out in 1897.[1] My own reading of Montaigne — or at least of Florio's Montaigne, the translation Shakespeare most probably read[2] — suggests that Robertson was right, and that the only indubitable echo of Montaigne is the one given by Capell, which relates *The Tempest* to the essay 'Of the caniballes':

> *Gonzalo:* I' th' commonwealth I would by contraries
> Execute all things; for no kind of traffic
> Would I admit; no name of magistrate;
> Letters should not be known; riches, poverty,
> And use of service, none; contract, succession,
> Bourn, bound of land, tilth, vineyard, none;
> No use of metal, corn, or wine, or oil;
> No occupation; all men idle, all;
> And women too, but innocent and pure:
> No sovereignty;
>
> (II.i.141).

> It is a nation, would I answer Plato, that hath no kinde of traffike, no knowledge of Letters, no intelligence of numbers, no name of magistrate, nor of politike superioritie: no use of service, of riches or of povertie; no contracts, no successions, no partitions, no occupation but idle; no respect of kinred, but common, no apparell but naturall, no manuring of lands, no use of wine, corne, or mettle. The very words that import lying, falshood, treason, dissimulations, covetousnes, envie, detraction, and pardon, were never heard of amongst them. How dissonant would hee finde his imaginarie commonwealth from this perfection!
>
> (I.xxx p. 220).

Here, the coincidences of phrase and the closely parallel sequence of argument make it highly unlikely that Shakespeare could have written Gonzalo's speech as we have it without Montaigne's

passage in front of him; it is too directly similar to suggest merely a memorial reconstruction or (even less likely) a coincidental parallelism of phrase. No other parallel is anything like as close as this one, but the sifting by various scholars has produced other verbal coincidences. Hamlet's 'beast that wants discourse of reason' has been compared with the following occurrences in Montaigne:

> Our religion hath had no surer humane foundation, than the contempt of life. Discourse of reason doth not only call and summon us unto it;
>
> (I,xix p. 86).

> . . . it is very hard, chiefely in humane action, to prescribe so exact rules by discourse of reason;
>
> (II,iv p. 44).

> . . . he who by discourse of reason fore-saw, that this budding disease would easily turne to an execrable Atheisme.
>
> (II,xii p. 126).

This seems very slight as an example of influence; nowhere is there a likeness of context, and the phrase 'discourse of reason', though perhaps not recorded elsewhere before, is a likely enough construction from the Middle English use of 'discourse' to mean 'reasoning, ratiocination' (OED). The other examples seem more telling:

> 'Tis a consummation
> Devoutly to be wish'd. To die, to sleep;
> To sleep, perchance to dream. Ay, there's the rub;
> For in that sleep of death what dreams may come,
> When we have shuffled off this mortal coil,
> Must give us pause.
>
> (*Hamlet*, III.i.63).

> If it be a consummation of one's being, it is also an amendment and entrance into a long and quiet night. Wee finde nothing so sweete in life, as a quiet rest and gentle sleepe, and without dreames.
>
> (III,xii p. 309).

This is better since both writers are talking of death as a consummation. But even here they differ in that Shakespeare fears the dreams that may come, while Montaigne is sure of being dreamless.

> A certain convocation of worms are e'en at him. Your worm is your only emperor for diet: we fat all creatures else to fat us, and we fat ourselves for maggots.
>
> (*Hamlet*, V.iii.20).

> The heart and life of a mighty and triumphant Emperor, is but the breakfast of a seely little Worm.
>
> (II.xii p. 155).

Here, the collocation of 'emperor' and 'worm' is convincing and this is made more effective by the exactness of the coincidence of thought and by the expanded visualisation Shakespeare gives of the same metaphor. The last of these cases of verbal likeness is again less persuasive, although the contexts are approximately like in considering fortune:

> There's a divinity that shapes our ends,
> Rough-hew them how we will.
>
> (*Hamlet*, V.ii.10).

> My consultation doth somewhat roughly hew the matter, and by it's first shew, lightly consider the same: the maine and chiefe point of the worke, I am wont to resigne to heaven.
>
> (III.viii p. 171).

I do not propose to sift any further; as Ellrodt has pointed out, there is little likelihood of uncovering any further or undetected close parallels. He turned instead to 'a broader consideration of the ways in which the minds of the French essayist and the English dramatist had worked in self-scrutiny'.[4] He concludes that a process of heightened self-awareness was a feature of the late sixteenth century, and asks, 'would Shakespeare have endowed Hamlet or Angelo with so vivid a self-consciousness if he had not read Montaigne?'[5] This ending on a question means that Ellrodt still regards the basic question of influence as open to discussion. On the evidence of Gonzalo's speech alone, I think that the simple answer must be affirmative,[6] and assuming for Shakespeare at least some acquaintance with Montaigne's thought, my concern here is not to find further concrete parallels, but to examine some of those already noticed on the basis of this assumption.

Montaigne's *Essays*, 107 titles on diverse topics (from 'Smels and odors' to the 'incommodity of greatnesse') varying in length from one page to 200 pages, constitute a long and exhaustive process of self-examination which gives us 'a doubt which rests upon itself and is endless, . . . religion, and . . . Stoicism', an 'ambigu-

ous self . . . which he never finished exploring'.' His own prefatory remarks to the reader issue an apparent warning:

> I have no respect or consideration at all, either to thy service, or to my glory: my forces are not capable of any such desseigne. I have vowed the same to the particular commodity of my kinsfolks and friends: . . . Had my intention beene to forestal and purchase the worlds opinion and favour, I would surely have adorned my selfe more quaintly, or kept a more grave and solemne march. I desire therein to be delineated in mine owne genuine, simple and ordinarie fashion, without contention, art or study; for it is my selfe I pourtray . . . if my fortune had beene to have lived among those nations, which yet are said to live under the sweet liberty of Natures first and uncorrupted lawes, . . . I would most willingly have pourtrayed my selfe fully and naked. Thus gentle Reader my selfe am the groundworke of my booke: It is then no reason thou shouldest employ thy time about so frivolous and vaine a Subject.[8]

This, taken together with his famous viewpoint, *Que scais-je?*, (What do I know?) inscribed on a medal with *Je m'abstiens*, (I abstain)[9] on the reverse, seems to suggest a withdrawal from the world; yet Montaigne's topics range widely over the common interests of men, and his characteristic address is as much in the plural as in the singular of the first-person, while the second- and third-persons are also constantly used. He constantly considers all views. Surely, then, an alternative view to egotistical withdrawal is that this concern with the self is meant to be a deferential gesture arising out of the common being of the one and the many, an impulse to stand aside and withhold judgement because he recognises the universal inheritance of human qualities, and is thus reluctant to criticise. An inclusive self, perhaps: included in the human race and therefore unable to comment objectively on it yet, because of his inclusion, able to represent it as an object of analysis.

This is, I think, implicit in the Preface cited above, which rejects the interest of the reader and also self-promotion, suggesting only a possible value as a record of himself for the 'commodity' — in Elizabethan usage, 'convenience' or 'advantage' — of his relatives and friends. These being necessarily of the same kind as other readers, Montaigne seems to both deny and assert a value for this record: it is a record of a man who is simply one of the many, and the many or the few can regard or disregard its value. The pointed contrast between 'I would surely have adorned my selfe more quaintly' and 'I would most willingly have pourtrayed my selfe

fully and naked', suggest the intended range of application: from the civilised and sophisticated to the primal and 'uncorrupted', he is one *of* the many and therefore representative. His self includes all selves. As a critic of man he speaks inclusively; self-knowledge becomes knowledge of the human condition.

Thus it is that he can include religion and Stoicism and Scepticism. As Merleau-Ponty says, 'It would be useless to pretend that he excludes any of these "positions", or that he ever makes any one of them *his own*'.[10] Montaigne (and Shakespeare) inhabited the pre-Cartesian world in which 'I am' was not yet a consequence of 'I think', a world of paradoxical existence in which the self was both included and excluded by the phenomena of experience. Montaigne 'never tired of experiencing the paradox of a *conscious being*. At each instant, in love, in political life, in perception's silent life, we adhere to something, make it our own, and yet withdraw from it and hold it at a distance'.[11] His consciousness is 'tied down at the same time it is free, and in one sole ambiguous act it opens to external objects and experiences itself as alien to them. Montaigne does not know that resting place, that self-possession, which Cartesian understanding is to be. . . . For Montaigne . . . we are interested in a world we do not have the key to. We are equally incapable of dwelling in ourselves and in things, and are referred from them to ourselves and from ourselves to them'.[12]

This process of reciprocal reference, of essential uncertainty about the self, has been analysed in some detail by Robert Ellrodt[13] as the development from Platonic objectivity, the pragmatic view of self-knowledge as knowing what you are capable of, through the Christian view of 'know thy sins', to the Renaissance realisation of the elusiveness of identity, the self's diversity and propensity for change witnessed by the age's common awareness of contradiction and inconstancy in human affairs. He further sees Elizabethan drama, especially Shakespeare's, as evidence of this development, especially in the way that 'characters move from sheer self-assertion or self-dramatization' — in Greene and Marlowe and early Shakespeare — 'to subtler forms of self-consciousness . . . genuine soliloquy, an image of the living mind'.[14] While a degree of self-analysis is evident in earlier plays — Gloucester in *Richard III*, Berowne in *Love's Labours Lost*, the Bastard in *King John* — and Brutus is introspective (but finally objective), it is in *Hamlet* that we first 'enter the stream of consciousness'[15] to any great extent. When we reach this play, 'the thought moves from the feeling to the cause or object of feeling'[16] a cognitive movement characteristic of self-analysis and typical of Montaigne. And as with Montaigne, there is no resolution to the questioning, only a constant quest. This is put well by Ellrodt: 'Hamlet's brooding intro-

spection does not achieve, but defeats, self-knowledge. Like Montaigne he is uncertain about his own motives'.[17]

This introspective concern is indeed a distinct development in *Hamlet*, which has to be distinguished from the recurrent earlier concern to unmask folly. The truth-seeking or bubble-popping function of a Berowne, a Beatrice, or a Touchstone, is not at all the same sort of thing as the anguished wrestling with motive that we see in Hamlet; and the difference lies essentially in a shift from perceptive criticism of an external kind largely exclusive of the self, to a more universally inclusive criticism in which the self also suffers. In Montaigne this position is, as suggested above of the Preface, constantly expressed; perhaps most directly at the end of the essay 'Of vanitie':[18]

> This common opinion and vulgar custome, to looke and marke elsewhere then on our selves, hath well provided for our affaires . . . To th' end we should not wholly be discomforted, Nature hath very fitly cast the action of our sight outward: *Wee goe forward according to the streame, but to turne our course backe to our selves, is a painefull motion*: the sea likewise is troubled, raging and disquieted, when't is turned and driven into it selfe" . . . It was a paradoxall commandement, which the God of Delphos laid heeretofoore upon us; saying: *View your selves within; know your selves; and keepe to your selves*: Your mind and your will, which elsewhere is consumed, bring it unto it selfe again: you scatter, you straggle, you stray, and you distract your selves: call your selves home again; rowze and uphold your selves: you are betrayed, you are spoiled and dissipated; your selves are stolen and taken from your selves. Seest thou not how all this universe holdeth all his sights compelled inward, and his eyes open to contemplate it selfe? Both inward and outward it is ever vanitie for thee; but so much lesse vanitie, by how much lesse it is extended. Except thyself, Oh man, (said that God) every thing doth first seeke and study it selfe, and according to it's neede hath limits to her travells, and bounds to her desires. There's not one so shallow, so empty, and so needy as *thou* art *who embracest the whole world*:[20] Thou art the Scrutator without knowledge, the magistrate without jurisdiction: and when all is done, the vice of the place.

This passage seems to confirm what I said of Montaigne's Preface,[21] and if we accept that Shakespeare had at least some knowledge of the *Essays*, it may help us to understand the simultaneous existence in Hamlet of the desire to expose fault and the hesitancy to act against it. Realisation of the self's inclusion in all human

qualities breeds a reluctance to judge, an awareness of being the 'magistrate without jurisdiction'. Of all characters none is so aware as Hamlet is of being this.

He is a man caught on the horns of the dilemma Merleau-Ponty calls 'the paradox of a conscious being',[22] for the conjunction of being and consciousness is at the very heart of Hamlet's most famous soliloquy. Being, existing, living with consciousness not only of evil but of the coextension of evil, the unavoidable coexistence with evil, the realisation that one's being is part of the universal being and therefore a sharer in evil,[23] is a burden that is debilitating, and Hamlet becomes less able to act the more conscious he becomes of the implications of his task. Ellrodt comments, 'self-consciousness so exercised is apt to dissolve character and motive'[24] and perhaps this will serve to explain why *Hamlet* is felt to be distinct from the other great tragedies — Schlegel called it a 'tragedy of thought'. Boas placed it amongst the problem plays, and even Bradley, grouping it with *Julius Caesar*, found 'an obvious difference' between them and the others, Brutus and Hamlet being 'intellectual by nature and reflective by habit'.[25] *Hamlet*, together with *Troilus and Cressida* and *Measure for Measure*, is 'more consonant with the spirit of Montaigne'[26] than are the later tragedies, where the question of being does not so directly lead to a problem of identity: 'The full tragic response calls for a heightened consciousness of identity — evident in Lear, Othello, or Macbeth — not for the kind of self-consciousness that may dissolve identity'.[27]

This process of self-analysis is the basic feature of Montaigne that makes us think also of Shakespeare, but it is not the only one. It directs us mainly to Hamlet, with Brutus, Angelo, and Troilus also nudging our attention. When great minds confront the world at roughly the same time, it seems likely that any affinity between them will show itself in more ways than one; and reading Montaigne, one is frequently reminded of Shakespeare — as the reverse case, the 200 years of Capellian scholarship in Shakespeare studies more than amply demonstrates. I would not go as far as Chasles, who remarked: 'once on the track of the studies and tastes of Shakespeare, we find Montaigne at every corner',[28] but I do feel a sense of affinity, a kind of *déjà vu* (coming to Montaigne after long reading of Shakespeare) in such randomly chosen statements as this:

> The Emperour perceiving the quaintnesse of their device, tooke so great pleasure at it, that hee wept for joy, and forthwith converted that former inexorable rage, and mortall hatred he bare the Duke, into so milde a relenting and gently kindnesse, that thence forward he entreated both him and his with all favour and courtesie. Either of these wayes might

> easily persuade mee: for I am much inclined to mercie, and affected to mildnesse. So it is, that in mine opinion, I should more naturally stoope unto compassion, than bend to estimation.
>
> (I.i p. 18).

Or this:

> Surely man is a wonderfull, vaine, divers, and wavering subject: it is very hard to ground any directly-constant and uniforme judgement upon him.
>
> (I.i p. 19).

Or this:

> Feare, desire, and hope, draw us ever towards that which is to come . . . *A minde in suspense what is to come, is in a pittifull case.*
>
> (I.iii p. 25).

Or this:

> There is no starting-hole will hide us from her (death), she will finde us wheresoever we are.
>
> (I.xix p. 75).

Or this:

> We are all framed of flaps and patches and of so shapelesse and diverse a contexture, that every peece and every moment playeth his part.
>
> (II.i p. 14).

Or, to cut short an otherwise endless list of usable quotations, these verbal likenesses all from the essay, *An Apologie of Raymond Sebond*:

> to see this coile and hurly-burly of so many Philosophical wits;
>
> (II.xii p. 220).

> to show how farre they had waded in seeking out the truth:
>
> (II.xii p. 209).

> because nothing is made of nothing;
>
> (II.xii p. 229).

> as the soules of the Gods, sanse tongues, sanse eyes, and sanse eares;
>
> (II.xii p. 236).
>
> as children will be afeard of their fellowes visage, which themselves have besmeared and blackt.
>
> (II.xii p. 236).

Clearly there is more than self-analysis linking Montaigne and Shakespeare; there is a likeness of thought and expression about the world and about man's qualities and actions. Now, as already conceded, some of this likeness can probably be attributed to a common reading of writers such as Seneca, Catullus, and Ovid (probably in English translation on Shakespeare's side),[29] and some, no doubt, are simply current views to be found in the commonplace books and proverbial sayings of the age. But as Robertson has pointed out, Montaigne's essays represent perhaps the most incisive crystallisation of the thought of the time — 'it is the living quintessence of all Latin criticism of life'.[30] That is to say that the essential views of European thought at the Renaissance are to be seen at their most vital in Montaigne. It strikes me that a great affinity between Montaigne and Shakespeare should be apparent in this vitality; in both writers we have the capacity for quintessential grasp and expression of the currents of the world they knew and, consequently, the kind of link we should expect is of the kind Robertson describes as 'kindling by contact',[31] Shakespeare being a 'co-thinker' whose own vitality of expression may adopt (or adapt) some part of Montaigne (in Florio's English), but which then bursts into its own life, leaving us glimpses of the essayist's terminology, but a distinct sense of being able to explain one in terms of the other. This is quite accepted now as orthodoxy in his other debts to Holinshed, to Plutarch, to Cinthio; perhaps Montaigne can be seen in this light too and some degree of confirmation of influence be derived[32] by analysing some of these moments of coincident vitality and intermingling of thought.

In an essay on Custom, of which the burden is that 'use brings the sight of our judgement asleepe', and the contingent view that what is customary seems to us natural law, Montaigne writes the following passage:

> Those which attempt to shake an Estate, are commonly the first overthrowne by the fall of it: he that is first mover of the same, reapeth not alwayes the fruit of such troubles; he beats and troubleth the water for others to fish in. The contexture and combining of this monarchie, and great building, having bin dismist and disolved by it, namely in her old yeares,

> giveth as much overture and entrance as a man will to like injuries. Royall Majestie doth more hardly fall from the top to the middle, than it tumbleth downe from the middle to the bottom.
>
> (I.xxii p. 119).

This has been related to Rosencrantz's words:

> the cease of majesty
> Dies not alone, but like a gulf doth draw
> What's near it with it. It is a massy wheel,
> Fix'd on the summit of the highest mount,
> To whose huge spokes ten thousand lesser things
> Are mortis'd and adjoin'd; which when it falls,
> Each small annexment, petty consequence,
> Attends the boist'rous ruin. Never alone
> Did the king sigh, but with a general groan.[33]
>
> (III.iii.15).

Now the energy of the Montaigne passage, like that of the Shakespeare passage, has something to do with the metaphoric expression it uses; the initial image, shaking down fruit from a tree, conveys the necessary sense of danger to the shaker who does not reap the fruit but is hurt by the fall; his function is further expressed by the parallel image of the fishermen's friend who chases the fish into their nets by disturbing the water, again with the sense of nothing being personally gained. This point metaphorically established, Montaigne turns back to the 'Estate' which he now pictures as a construction, an old building that collapses. This is forceful, but it is not at all like the imagery of Shakespeare's passage which depends on the downward path of a wheel — clearly akin to fortune's wheel — which carries all with it to destruction. Metaphoric strength, then, cannot be the main basis for comparison. Yet the passages are alike with a consonant energy of thought. In the Montaigne passage, greater liveliness arises from the way it impinges on the argument of the essay than from its metaphoric energy.

In spite of the evident conservatism of the focal passage, Montaigne is arguing *against* the tyranny of custom:

> But the chiefest effect of her power is to seize upon us, and so entangle us, that it shall hardly lie in us, to free our selves from her hold-fast, and come into our wits againe, to discourse and reason of her ordinances; verily, because wee sucke them with the milke of our birth, and forasmuch as the worlds visage presents it selfe in that estate unto our first view, it seemeth we are borne with a condition to follow that

> course. And the common imaginations we finde in credit about us, and by our fathers seed infused in our soule, seeme to be the generall and naturall. Whereupon it followeth, that whatsoever is beyond the compasse of custome, wee deeme likewise to bee beyond the compasse of reason; God knowes how for the most part, unreasonably.
>
> (I.xxii p. 114).

However, the argument begins to shift ground: the attempt to justify views as inherently right rather than right simply on the grounds of custom, is difficult:

> Certes, chastitie is an excellent vertue, the commoditie whereof is very well known: but to use it, and according to nature to prevaile with it, is as hard as it is easie, to endeare it and to prevaile with it according to custome, to lawes and precepts. The first and universall reasons are of a hard perscrutation.
>
> (I.xxii p. 116).

In these circumstances, most 'cast themselves headlong into the . . . sanctuarie of custome'. Montaigne's position at this stage is still clear:

> He that will free himselfe from this violent prejudice of custome, shall find divers things received with an undoubted resolution, that have no other anker but the hoarie head and frowning wrimples of custome, which ever attends them: which maske being pulled off, and referring all matters to truth and reason, he shall perceive his judgement, as it were overturned, and placed in a much surer state.
>
> (I.xxii p. 116).

He goes so far as to 'commend fortune' that it was a countryman of his that 'first opposed himselfe against Charles the Great, at what time he went about to establish the Latine and Imperiall lawes amongst us'. This gave rise to the 'barbarous' situation in which 'a fourth estate of Lawyers, breath-sellers, and pettifoggers' being 'apart and severall' from the Nobility, brings about 'double Lawes; those of honour, and those of justice'. We expect him to be consistent and be glad of those who 'attempt to shake an Estate'; but what follows this argument is a new concern which leads to a compromise:

> These considerations do neverthelesse never distract a man of understanding from following the common guise. Rather

> on the contrary, me seemeth, that all severall, strange, and particular fashions proceed rather of follie, or ambitious affectation, than of true reason: and that a wise man ought inwardly to retire his minde from the common presse, and hold the same liberty and power to judge freely of all things, but for outward matters, he ought absolutely to follow the fashions and forme customarily received. Publike societie hath nought to do with our thoughts; but for other things, as our actions, our travel, our fortune, and our life, that must be accommodated and left to it's service and common opinions: as that good and great Socrates, who refused to save his life by disobeying the magistrate, yea a magistrate most wicked and unjust. For that is the rule of rules, and generall law of lawes, for every man to observe those of the place wherein he liveth.
>
> (I,xxii pp. 117–118).

This distinction between inward judgement and outward action seems to me to be the crucial factor in the argument, and perhaps a reason why Shakespeare might have adapted the focal passage for his own use in *Hamlet*. Montaigne goes on immediately to posit the dangers involved in allowing action to follow judgement without hesitation:

> There riseth a great doubt, whether any so evident profit may be found in the change of a received law, of what nature soever, as there is hurt in removing the same; forsomuch as a well settled policie may be compared to a frame or building of divers parts joyned together with such a ligament as it is impossible to stirre or displace one, but the whole body must needs be shaken, and shew a feeling of it. The Thurians Lawgiver instituted that, whosoever would go about, either to abolish any one of the old Lawes, or attempt to establish a new, should present himself before the people with a roape about his necke, to the end, that if his invention were not approved of all men, he should presently bee strangled.
>
> (I,xxii p. 118).

The change in direction brings about a tension of indecision; if we read further we find both praise and blame for the shaker of an estate:

> If there be any degree of honour, even in ill doing, these (who follow him) are indebted to others for the glory of the invention, and courage of the first attempt.
>
> (I,xxii p. 119).

> Yet me seemeth . . . that it argueth a great selfe-love and presumption, for a man to esteeme his opinions so far, that for to establish them, a man must be faine to subvert a publike peace, and introduce so many inevitable mischiefes, and so horrible a corruption of manners, as civill warres, and alterations of a state bring with them.
>
> (I.xxii pp. 119–120).

The issue is finally scrutinised in this way:

> There is much difference betweene the cause of him that followeth the formes and lawes of his countrie, and him that undertaketh to governe and change them. The first alleageth for his excuse, simplicitie, obedience, and example; whatsoever he doth cannot be malice, at the most it is but ill lucke.
>
> (I.xxii p. 120).

This person is subject to the original criticism of the essay, that to follow custom is to close the eyes to judgement. However, 'the other is in much worse case':

> For he that medleth with chusing and changing, usurpeth the authoritie of judging: and must resolve himselfe to see the fault of what he hunteth for, and the good of what he bringeth in.
>
> (I.xxii p. 121).

This usurpation of judgement flows from an arrogance that assumes the right to emulate divine judgement:

> If at any time divine providence hath gone beyond the rules, to which it hath necessary constrained us, it is not to give us a dispensation from them. They are blowes of her divine hand, which we ought not imitate, but admire: as extraordinarie examples, markes of an expresse and particular avowing of the severall kinds of wonders, which for a testimonie of her omnipotencie it offereth us, beyond our orders and forces, which it is follie and impietie to goe about to represent, and which we ought not follow but contemplate with admiration, and meditate with astonishment.
>
> (I.xxii p. 121).

Thus we have an argument that shows the folly equally of bowing to custom and of attempting to change it. The passage suggested as having influenced Shakespeare, taken out of context, has a general sense of conservative caution about it and a broadly simi-

lar point is made by it and by Rosencrantz. On a figurative level the resemblance is limited to the picture of a fall or collapse. Nevertheless, the intuition of the original comparison may be well-founded in the light of the present analysis. For Shakespeare does not simply follow an apparent conservatism in Montaigne here, as one's preconceptions about his distaste for civil disorder might suggest; taken in its context as part of the reasoning why the essayist cannot come to the logical conclusion of his original observations on custom, we have a more thoroughgoing parallel with *Hamlet* which, at this point, presents a similar view as a result of similar reasoning.

The immediate context of the Shakespeare passage in terms of the play's action, is the play-scene which has precipitated the king's sense of physical danger. Before this he has given hints that he realises Hamlet judges him inwardly; welcoming Rosencrantz and Guildenstern, he makes the Montaignean distinction between inward and outward man:

> Something have you heard
> Of Hamlet's transformation; so I call it,
> Sith nor th' exterior nor the inward man
> Resembles that it was.
>
> (II,ii.4).

Later he speaks of Hamlet's 'turbulent and dangerous lunacy', and after his eavesdropping on the exchange between Hamlet and Ophelia, he is convinced that there is indeed a danger that proceeds from within:

> There's something in his soul
> O'er which his melancholy sits on brood;
> And I do doubt the hatch and the disclose
> Will be some danger.
>
> (III,i.164).

Claudius is speaking to Polonius and cannot openly state that he links this 'something in his soul' with his own 'heavy burden', but this implication is inescapable in the realisation of personal danger resulting from the hatching of what Hamlet broods over. He is aware of being inwardly judged by Hamlet and now, to avoid this judgement turning into outward action, he takes the obvious precaution of removing Hamlet from the country. The intention of doing this is revealed almost immediately before the play-scene; after it, his anxiety is very obvious in the report of Guildenstern to Hamlet that he is 'marvellous distempered', and in his abrupt deci-

sion to send Hamlet to England at once. His sense of personal danger is now stated openly:

> I like him not; nor stands it safe with us
> To let his madness range . . .
> The terms of our estate may not endure
> Hazard so near's as doth hourly grow
> Out of his brows.
>
> (III.iii.1).

The threat is in fact quite open, as Dover Wilson points out in his notes to the play: Hamlet has arranged two meanings for the play, 'one for the king (and Horatio), the other for the rest . . . who see a king being murdered by his nephew. In other words Hamlet prepares the Court for the assassination of Claudius which was intended to follow'.[34] Thus, without destroying the distinction between inward judgement and outward action — the king's secret is still intact, between him and Halmet and Horatio — Shakespeare contrives to make the outward action of Hamlet appear to all the court a real danger, not only to the king, but also to all who depend on him. Putting the focal speech in Rosencrantz's mouth adds the dimension of representative conservative interest to the formality it derives from a conventional image.

In terms of Montaigne's essay then, the situation at this point in *Hamlet* is that Hamlet is clearly seen to intend to shake the estate — Claudius uses this very word — showing thus an apparent change from his former inwardness of judgement and hesitancy over action, to a determination to act at once against the king. But for Shakespeare, as for Montaigne, moral judgement and condemnation of corruption was one thing, direct physical revolt was another; and thus the play follows out what the essay shows, the necessary course of folly that attends on the attempt to change the state by usurping the divine right of punishment, of assuming the right to deliver the 'blowes of her divine hand, which we ought not to imitate, but admire'. The ghost urges him to do this while his sensibilities and education warn him off. As long as he hesitates and only contemplates revenge he is safe, but as soon as he makes the attempt, Providence exerts its power and demonstrates that Hamlet is after all merely a pawn in the game of revenge — ironically justifying his long hesitation and confirming what he has half-known all along. The action from the mistaken killing of Polonius, Laertes' mistaken revolt, and Hamlet's accidental escape from his fate at sea, to the confusion of the swordplay which finally achieves the execution of justice on Claudius — all this is a chapter of accidents. Hamlet becomes (as Johnson long ago told us and as Goethe intimated) an instrument in the hands of Providence,

acknowledged in the words already cited as a possible echo of Montaigne:

> Our indiscretion sometime serves us well,
> When our deep plots do pall; and that should learn us
>
> There's a divinity that shapes our ends,
> Rough-hew them how we will.
>
> (V,ii.8).

And perhaps also in 'the readiness is all'. In its construction, the play shows the same tendency of thought as we find in Montaigne's essay, and the same vitality which springs from the complexity of qualified argument rather than the following of a simple linear path of morality.

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NOTES

1. *Montaigne and Shakespeare*, (London, 1897, revised 1909). Introduction.
2. J.M. Cohen, *Montaigne, Essays*, (Penguin Books, 1958), p. 21, says that 'Florio is far from Montaigne in the spirit, and not too accurate in the word'. Those who have pursued the Shakespeare-Montaigne link, however, have not set out to give scholarly readings of Montaigne, but to suggest links between two minds that have struck common chords in their writings. Perhaps the implied disjunction can be restored if we agree that 'Montaigne' in this context stands for Florio's Montaigne.
3. Montaigne references are to volume, chapter, and page in the Everyman's Library edition, (Dent, 1910, 1973).
4. R. Ellrodt, 'Self-consciousness in Montaigne and Shakespeare', *Shakespeare Survey* 28, p. 37.
5. ibid., p. 50.
6. Ellrodt also begins from this affirmation: 'the verbal borrowings from Florio . . . are beyond doubt', and 'certainty is afforded by the recurrence of (several) phrases'. ibid., p. 37, text and footnote 3.
7. M. Merleau-Ponty, *Collected essays*, (Heinemann 1974), p. 123.
8. op. cit., vol. I, p. 15.
9. This can be variably translated, the senses 'stand aside' and 'aloof' being given by Harrap's *New shorter French and English dictionary*, London 1940. The expression, *dans le doute abstiens-toi* (when in doubt, don't) is relevant.
10. op. cit., p. 123.
11. ibid., p. 124.
12. ibid., p. 124.
13. op. cit., p. 42 *et seq.*
14. ibid., p. 45.
15. ibid., p. 47, citing H. Levin.
16. ibid., p. 47.
17. ibid., p. 47.
18. Vol. III, ch. IX, the last four sentences cited by Merleau-Ponty, op. cit., p. 124.
19. A possible source for Hamlet's 'sea of troubles'?
20. My emphasis.
21. cf. p. 5 above.

22. op. cit., p. 124, cf. p. 5 above.
23. Conrad's tale, *The secret sharer*, seems to involve a view something like this.
24. op. cit., p. 48.
25. *Shakespearean tragedy*, London 1904 (Macmillan, 1969), p. 63.
26. Ellrodt, op. cit., p. 49.
27. ibid., p. 49.
28. *Journal des débats*, November 7, 1846; cited by Robertson.
29. The question of Shakespeare's classical reading, since Farmer's essay of 1767, seems to have settled into this probability. G.K. Hunter recently suggests, however, that his 'small Latin' 'included an ability to get sense out of works not translated'. See Muir and Schoenbaum, *A new companion to Shakespeare studies*, (CUP 1971), p. 57.
30. op. cit., p. 166.
31. op. cit., p. 65. This is in the same vein as Hunter's view of Shakespeare's classicism, 'best regarded in . . . terms of creative affinity', Hunter, op. cit., p. 58.
32. cf. Hunter's statement, 'the classical author is still an influence . . . but his power is derived from his capacity to release Shakespeare's own faculties', ibid., p. 58.
33. My parallels are culled from Robertson, op. cit., compared with and brought up to date by Ellrodt, op. cit.
34. J. Dover Wilson, *Hamlet*, The new Shakespeare, CUP, 1934), paper edition 1969, pp. 203–204.

THREE NOTES ON *THE WINTER'S TALE*

by C.O. GARDNER

LEONTES

It is only in this century that the greatness of the last plays has been recognized. What the critics of the last forty or fifty years have discovered and stressed is that, though these plays are in many ways related to the earlier plays and especially to the great tragedies, they employ dramatic and poetic techniques that are distinctly different from any that Shakespeare had used before. We find ourselves, for example, at a somewhat greater distance from the man who undergoes a fall, and the dramatist is more concerned about the pattern and the significance of the progress from tragic and sinful disruption to reconciliation and redemption than about the specificities of 'character'.

These considerations are usually seen — correctly, in my view — as applying obviously to *The Winter's Tale* and to Leontes. Once this has been accepted, however, it is necessary, I believe, to recognize that the differences between the tragedies and the last plays must not be exaggerated. Though Leontes is not given to us as elaborately or quite as sympathetically as (say) Othello, the success of the play depends upon our responding to him very fully; and Shakespeare was too good and too experienced a dramatist not to have realized this. Certainly one must reject several of the views of Leontes discernible in some recent criticism — that he is mainly a symbolic figure hardly to be thought of as a human person at all, or else a fundamentally cruel man to be judged in mainly moral terms, or even a fanatical man to be assessed in aesthetic terms. It would be more true to say that Leontes is felt to be something of an 'everyman', of whom we might say: 'But for the grace of God, there go I'.

How does Shakespeare create the response that seems to me to be the required one? In the opening scene and the first 100 lines of scene ii we are caught up in the cordial and civilized atmosphere of the interchange between Leontes, Hermione and Polixenes, and we are impressed not only by Leontes himself but by the attitude towards him expressed by the other two. Their talk of the beauty and the precariousness of innocence prepares us, subconsciously, for Leontes's sudden jealousy. In his outburst of feeling and suspicion, ferocious and terrible as it is, Leontes nevertheless *suffers* so deeply that it is impossible for us to react with simple moral indignation. The intensity of his thought and emotion — and of the

poetry that Shakespeare gives him — leaves us with a sense of the King's essential nobility as well as of his frailty. He acts irrationally and tyrannically, but we are reminded that he has not behaved like this before, that some sickness has mastered him; Camillo says:

> 'Shrew my heart,
> You never spoke what did become you less
> Than this . . .
>
> Good my lord, be cured
> Of this diseased opinion, and betimes,
> For 'tis most dangerous.
>
> (I ii 281, 296).

And the imaginative reaction of Polixenes, soon after he has heard that Leontes wanted him poisoned, provides a pointer to the audience's response:

> This jealousy
> Is for a precious creature; as she's rare
> Must it be great; and as his person's mighty
> Must it be violent . . .
>
> (I ii 451).

Nevertheless Leontes's violence, when we see it directed at Hermione, is shocking, just as her strong and generous replies are admirable. Still, it is clear at every moment that Leontes suffers as vehemently as Hermione does. He is in danger of forfeiting our sympathy when he contemptuously rejects the reasonable pleas of Antigonus and the other Lord, but our response changes when we learn that he has sent Cleomenes and Dion to the oracle.

Leontes is at his worst in his treatment of his new daughter, and of Hermione at her trial: there are of course many suggestions — some explicit, some implicit in the imagery — that he is pitting himself against the order and richness of nature. But throughout in pain: 'Nor night nor day no rest!' (II iii 1). and he is not inhumanly resolute — 'I am a feather for each wind that blows' (II iii 153) — nor is he without the desire to deal fairly:

> as she hath
> Been publicly accused, so shall she have
> A just and open trial.
>
> (II iii 202).

When the oracle proclaims Hermione's innocence, Leontes's bitter emotions overwhelm him: in denying the truth of the oracle he finally confirms the blasphemousness of his allegation. But imme-

diately he is punished; he recognizes his mistake, and repents. He is jolted back into sanity and piety as rapidly as he was earlier thrown into wildness:

> Apollo, pardon
> My great profaneness 'gainst thine oracle!
>
> (III ii 151).

From this moment Leontes gives himself over to sorrow and penitence. Those critics who find him rather inhuman or rather abnormal may regard his asceticism as hardly more endearing than his jealousy. But it is important to recognize (as Leontes himself does intuitively) that his passionate mistake has been a terrible one, and that its effects are far-reaching: Perdita is lost, Mamillius has died, Hermione in a sense dies, and the wrath of Apollo strikes down Antigonus and the sailors. For all her rhetorical emphasis, Paulina's words carry great weight:

> But, O thou tyrant,
> Do not repent these things, for they are heavier
> Than all thy woes can stir. Therefore betake thee
> To nothing but despair.
>
> (III ii 205).

In the face of such advice, Leontes's response is sensitive and fundamentally creative:

> Once a day I'll visit
> The chapel where they lie, and tears shed there
> Shall be my *recreation.*
>
> (III ii 236).

Leontes deeply desires purity, reparation, the restoration of naturalness, though he has no idea what future lies ahead of him. He senses that only a great effort of self-sacrifice can act as any sort of counterweight to what has happened. Paulina recognizes the value of Leontes's response — 'He is touched To th'noble heart' (III ii 219); the sudden tenderness that she feels for him is surely a guide for the audience.

Leontes, then, is not merely the central figure in the play's pattern of tragedy-and-reconciliation. We respond to him as a realized personality. And indeed in him, as he makes his heroic and religious act of re-creation, is embodied something of the dramatist's own determination to transcend a tragic vision of life. Moreover it is only a Leontes who evokes a profound response in us that is capable of being a focus for, and an animating participant in, those values and meanings and fulfilments which gather in the final scenes.

THE ESSENCE OF THE TRAGIC: A TELLING MOMENT IN THE PLAY

There has of course been a great deal of discussion of the exact nature and the meaning of the central issues in each of Shakespeare's tragedies and in his tragedies as a whole. At times — as in Othello's final speech — there is (in my view) more than a hint of the author's own interpretation of the tragic events; but in general he can be said to maintain a perfect and enigmatical silence. The meaning resides in the total experience of the play.

In his last plays Shakespeare seems to epitomize the 'world' of the tragedies and to place this 'world' in a new non-tragic (or 'post-tragic') perspective. It was to be expected that in this process of summing up and defining Shakespeare should offer some clues as to his own sense of what might be called the essential tragic experience; and such a clue is indeed to be found, I believe, in a speech in *The Winter's Tale* that has received surprisingly little critical attention.

Leontes's astonishing and terrible jealousy has burst forth, and Polixenes, partly from his own observation and partly from what Camillo has told him, realises that he must fly from Sicilia at once. He knows himself to be wholly innocent of what Leontes suspects and he has no idea how the suspicion originated, but — as an imaginative and generous person — he regards Leontes's destructive rage with awe and compassion. For a few moments Polixenes seems to have become a commentator on the action, a chorus:

> This jealousy
> Is for a precious creature; as she's rare
> Must it be great; and as his person's mighty
> Must it be violent; and as he does conceive
> He is dishonoured by a man which ever
> Professed to him, why, his revenge must
> In that be made more bitter.
>
> (I ii 451).

These lines deserve close analysis. What they suggest above all is that attempts to see the anger and violence that erupt at the heart of tragedy in mainly moral terms are misplaced. The magnitude of the disorder stems essentially not from a moral inadequacy in the protagonist — though some such inadequacy may also exist — but precisely from his discriminating sense of values ('as she's rare Must it be great'), from his 'nobility', his intuitive awareness of the worth of himself and of what he stands for ('as his person's mighty Must it be violent') and from the acute and powerful emotions that inevitably and rightly accompany such intensity of

life ('and as he does conceive He is dishonoured by a man which ever Professed to him . . .').

Polixenes's formulation seems particularly applicable not only to Leontes but also, *mutatis mutandis*, to Othello. It is generally relevant too, I believe, to all of the major tragedies, and perhaps to all tragedy. The disaster, the 'fall', results not so much from a moral fault as from a fatal mistake, what is demonstrated is not man's capacity to choose evil (though, as in *Macbeth*, that may be an important aspect of the matter) but the tendency of human nature, and of all 'nature', in certain circumstances to make war with itself.

These perceptions are not new. What may be rather new, however, is the recognition that Shakespeare articulated them himself — that at this moment in *The Winter's Tale* he may perhaps be thought of as having become the first of the great critics of Shakespearean tragedy.

THE WORD 'STRIKE'

The word 'strike' appears fairly frequently in Shakespeare's plays. In *The Winter's Tale*, however, the word seems to play a pivotal role, as it appears at each of the three climactic moments in Leontes's life.

In Act I he is thrown into his terrifying jealousy. The emotion overwhelms him, and he feels that the whole universe is wild and malignant:

> Physic for't there's none:
> It is a bawdy planet, that will strike
> Where 'tis predominant; and 'tis powerful, think it,
> From east, west, north, and south. Be it concluded,
> No barricado for a belly . . .
>
> (I ii 200).

He accuses Hermione of adultery. Later the oracle declares that she is innocent, but he denounces the oracle. Immediately after this the news of his son's death arrives, and he cries out:

> Apollo's angry, and the heavens themselves
> Do strike at my injustice.
>
> (III ii 144).

Hermione dies, or appears to die. Leontes lives a life of penance and sorrow. Sixteen years later, when Paulina reminds him that he had killed his wife, he can still say:

> She I killed! I did so; but thou strik'st me
> Sorely to say I did.
>
> (V i 17).

Eventually, when the time is ripe, when Perdita has been found, Paulina takes Leontes and the others to see a statue of Hermione, or what appears to be a statue of her; and gradually Hermione's life is manifested. At the crucial, miraculous moment Paulina calls for music, the symbol of harmony and restored relationship:

> Music, awake her, strike!
>
> (Viii 98).

And then, as the music plays and as she addresses Hermione, Paulina uses the word in a different though related sense:

> 'Tis time: descend; be stone no more; approach;
> Strike all that look with marvel.
>
> (V iii 99).

These uses of the word seem to me to reinforce our sense of the play's structure. In his determination to move beyond the bounds of tragedy and to compress a large amount of material into the compass of five acts, Shakespeare employs an original technique: the drama is spurred forward not mainly by the interaction of characters and by psychological development (though both of these elements are very important) but by a series of bold revelatory strokes. In the play as a whole, man is seen as highly responsible for his own destiny; indeed he is more fully responsible than he was in the great tragedies (Leontes is felt to be rather more culpable than Othello, for example, and he is able to co-operate richly in his own redemption). But at the same time man is seen as surrounded by influences that lie well beyond his control: Leontes is *struck* first by jealousy, then by the anger of the heavens, and finally by the marvel of Hermione's resurrection.